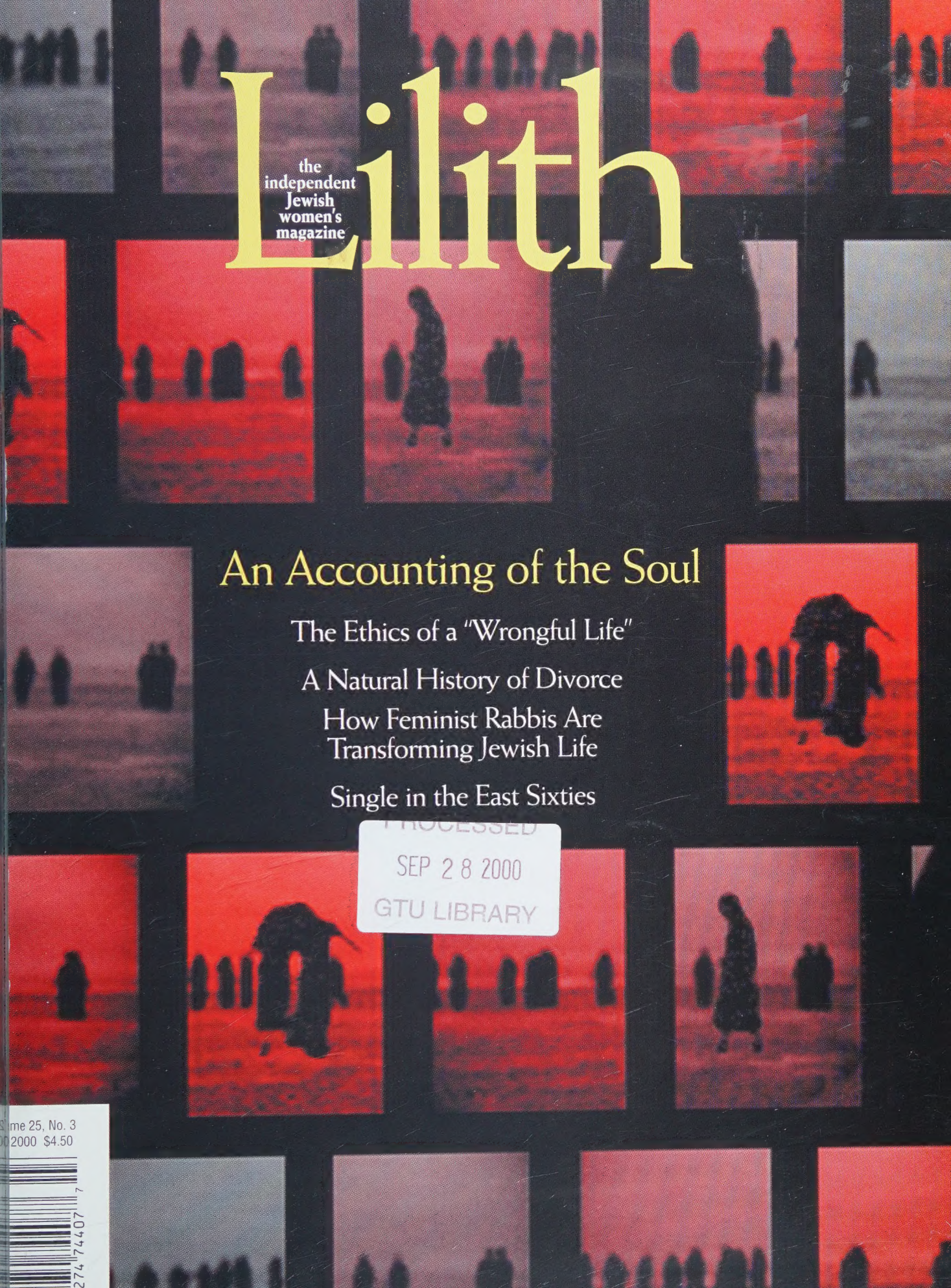

Lilith
the independent Jewish women's magazine
An Accounting of the Soul
The Ethics of a "Wrongful Life"
A Natural History of Divorce
How Feminist Rabbis Are Transforming Jewish Life
Single in the East Sixties

PROCESSED
SEP 28 2000
GTU LIBRARY

me 25, No. 3
2000 $4.50

THE GARY ROSENTHAL COLLECTION

invites you to *Celebrate Study*

Personalized Bookends

The Perfect Bat Mitzvah Gift

Finely Handcrafted

Commemorate the occasion with the Haftarah Portion, Name and Date

This bookend set was created in honor of both the "Women of the Bible" and the women of today who are now embracing the tradition of study.

Bar Mitzvah bookends also available

Created from sculpted mixed metals with imagery screened on polished marble.

Available in two sizes: 8 or 6 inches tall

Available at these fine galleries and shops or call 1-800-962-1545 to locate the gallery nearest you

Northern Virginia JCC Annandale, VA • **Unique Accents** Northbrook, IL • **Ohev Shalom Gift Shop** Harrisburg, PA
Brith Achim Gift Shop King of Prussia, PA • **Israeli Accents** Rockville, MD • **Beth Shalom** Needham, MA
Congregation B'nai Tikvah Clayton, CA • **Something Special** Allentown, PA • **B'nai Torah** Atlanta, GA
Right Angle Gallery Manalapan, NJ • **Temple Israel Sisterhood Gift Shop** W. Bloomfield, IL
Abis Judaica Agoura Hills, CA • **Ilona & Gallery** W. Bloomfield, MI • **Beth El** Norfolk, VA
Temple Israel Albany, NY • **Bob & Bob** Palo Alto, CA • **Beth El** Baltimore, MD

The Gary Rosenthal Collection, Inc. 4210 Howard Avenue Kensington, MD 20895
301-493-5577 FAX 301-493-5578 email rosnthl@erols.com
Visit our website at www.collectgaryrosenthal.com

Lilith

Volume 25, No. 3 Fall 2000

2 **From the Editor**

4 **Kol Ishah**

News you haven't heard before

Assertiveness, at any age • Hoop Dreams • Women rising • Photographing the Shekhina

8 **When Jewish Women Care for Others**

by Susan Weidman Schneider

New legal, social and very personal issues come into play. Here's some guidance.

10 **It Helps to Be a Feminist . . .**

by Sarah Blustain

If you're a rabbi trying to open up your synagogue to Jews with diverse needs, feminist forbears in the pulpit (or on the ground) show how to succeed at changemaking.

15 **A Lesson in Dying**

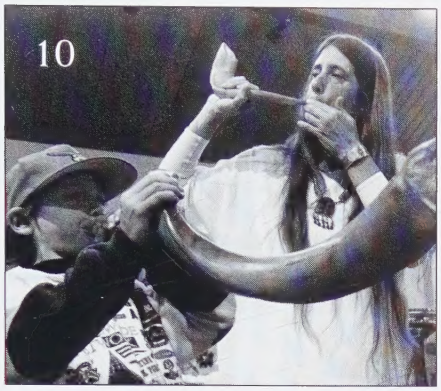
by Ann Moliver Ruben

The author's beloved husband was raced to the hospital after a stroke; why did she try, and fail, to let him die? Here, also, a prayer if you have to remove life support from a parent, a poem by Sharon Olds, and clues to choosing someone to make health-care decisions for you.

20 **Equality Bursts Forth in Israel**

by Helen Schary Motro

The Knesset passes three revolutionary laws protecting women from sex trafficking, discrimination and harassment....And in New York, women are "honored" at the Israeli consulate.



23 **A Husband of Valor**

humor from Susan Ellman

24 **A Natural History of Divorce**

by Judyth Har Even

26 **My First Aliyah**

by Marianne Langner Zeitlin

Wherein a grown woman, caught without a hankie in the web of her own memories, cries her eyes out.

29 **Still Life with Poodles**

a short story about the single life by Valerie Ann Leff

32 **What All Good Kids' Books Are Made Of**

Tales of life and death, orphanages and escapes, rescues and friendship mark this Fall's rich harvest.

36 **Reviews**

43 **Remembering *Julia***

by Bonnie Morris

Coming out as a Jew and a lesbian watching Lillian Hellman's classic story on the big screen.

45 **The Creative Edge**

Crafts, gifts and more.

46 **Tsena Rena**

The indispensable LILITH resource pages.

48 **Ties That Bind**

by Michelle E. Friedman

A psychiatrist joins the *chevra kadisha*, and finds herself preparing a friend's body for the grave.

Michal Rovner, an Israeli-born multi-media artist, lives in New York City. The cover images are taken from her video and sound project Overhanging, *at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Rovner's work often deals with the experience of extremes: cold/heat, solidity/fragility, naturalism/fabrication. She most recently exhibited in the Whitney Biennial 2000, and is working on a mid-career survey, to open at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2002.*

To contact LILITH: 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107 Phone: (212) 757-0818 Fax: (212) 757-5705 e-mail address: lilithmag@aol.com web site: www.lilithmag.com

Retailers: Contact these distributors to carry LILITH: DeBoer's (973) 667-9300, Desert Moon (505) 474-6311, Ingram (800) 627-6247, Koen Distributors (856) 235-4444, New Leaf (770) 948-7845 or Small Changes (206) 382-1980.

LILITH occasionally makes its mailing list available to organizations or publishers. If you do not want to receive such mail, please send label & request to: LILITH, Dept. LIL, P. O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834.

To subscribe: Individual subscriptions $18/4 issues; institutions $24/4 issues. In Canada add $6/year; other overseas add $8/year. (US funds only). Single copies $6, prepaid. Change of address, or delivery problems: send correspondence with subscription label to: LILITH, Dept. LIL, P. O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834, or call (800) 783-4903 or (212) 757-0818.

LILITH is published by Lilith Publications, Inc., a non-profit organization. Copyright © Lilith Publications, Inc. 2000. All rights reserved under international and Pan American Conventions. Associate member American Jewish Press Association. Indexed in Index to Jewish Periodicals. Available from University Microfilms International. ISSN 0146-2334.

from the editor

An accounting of the soul. What do we mean by that line on the cover?

By the time you read this, we will have weathered preparations for the High Holy Days. In secular and in religious terms, this is a season of reckonings. No matter how many years out of school we are, fall always feels like a new beginning, and the Hebrew calendar matches these feelings with Rosh Hashanah. This year in particular the season seems especially charged. Politically, we have a sense of hope and possibility at the prospect of longed-for change in Israel. And the U.S. elections, without question, feel thrilling for Jews (though my younger daughter did say she thought I'd like it even better if a Jewish *woman* were the vice-presidential nominee). We anticipate the year to come, but stop long enough to evaluate the experiences of the year that has been.

In Hebrew the line we have put on our cover reads as *cheshbon ha nefesh*, an accounting of the soul. A number of the pieces in this issue capture the reflective and dramatic qualities of that cover line, which we chose because of its link to the High Holidays, and because it so accurately portrays the self-examination in much of what you're about to read.

On the theme of taking stock, this issue of LILITH includes, as always, the personal as well as the political. Several first-person stories here help us see the world in new ways, refracted through women's experience. It was the piece "My First Aliyah" which triggered the shape of this issue. It's a stop-time frame as a woman standing on the *bimah* sees every marker-moment of her life flash past her. For months we had been trying to decide when to run this article. Its themes of flashback and gratitude seemed finally just right for this issue, and then other articles we were thinking about for fall gathered themselves together, iron filings around a magnet.

Because for many Jews the High Holidays represent the most time we spend in services all year long, this also felt like the perfect season to look at the role feminist rabbis are playing in our spiritual and communal experiences. What happens to most of us in synagogue? We sit and stand, sometimes numbly, sometimes truly moved by a portion of the liturgy, sometimes taking the time just to feel still and centered. We also have time to reflect on our own complex relationship with our religious practice, and even with the institution of the synagogue itself. What does it offer us? And what can we offer to *it* the rest of the days of the year? We now—especially those of us who are female—have the opportunity to be actors and activists in our own spiritual lives as never before. To be full participants and not merely observers.

A little gratitude helps us see that our world improves every season. But only because we care enough to make this so.

LILITH offers here an account of the ways in which some women rabbis have changed our lives, and not only because of what goes on during services—soprano voices, new texts—but also in many more significantly structural ways. Sarah Blustain, in interviews with self-described feminist rabbis across the country, demonstrates that they are actually changing the ways congregations do business: how decisions are made, whether power is shared, the ways in which rabbinic authority and the yearning for democracy combine. This is a first and important examination of these issues, which are considerably more nuanced than just counting up how many women have entered the rabbinate in the past three decades (though we do indeed offer a chart of these remarkable numbers for your delectation). This report measures how congregations have changed, and indicates what these changes foretell for the continuing transformation of our communal life. To what can we attribute the radical changes in synagogue life over the past few years? Often it is the energy and vision of feminist rabbis who, leading congregations, have altered the experience of prayer and of community for many of us.

As with other aspect of Jewish life now, women are opening doors for men. The article on feminist rabbis begins what will be a series of articles evaluating the accomplishments of the Jewish women's movement. Watch for more in the coming months, as we take the occasion of LILITH's 25th anniversary to map out in a broader way the road we've traversed and to survey the paths ahead.

As LILITH's editors do our own accounting of the magazine's trajectory, so too do our authors from various points on their own journeys. "Still Life with Poodles" is fiction with a twist, an accounting of the life options of a New York woman, single in her mid-thirties, toying with the question of whether a woman's only goal should be to marry well. The protagonist totes up her options, with surprising results. While this story is about deciding whether to marry, the darker side of matrimony is exposed in "A Natural History of Divorce," tracking a woman's self-esteem from girlhood through a depleting marriage. In another story, the cautionary and harrowing memoir "Let My Husband Die," a woman fights to have end-of-life desires granted; her narrative is accompanied by an extraordinary poem from Sharon Olds on the responsibilities of love, and of lovers.

And then there is the remarkable back page, where a doctor shifts her perspective from medicine to sanctity, tenderly preparing a body for burial as part of a "sacred sisterhood," the *chevra kadisha*.

One of our readers called us recently complaining that everything in LILITH magazine seemed "so sad." Is this true? I was a little worried as I looked over the final mix of articles in our accounting-of-the-soul pages. Divorce, growing old, dying, burial. Interesting thing is, as individuals I think many of us so often focus on the bad news; it seems to take up all the oxygen. But looking again at the pages before us, I see a poem poking fun at the men in our lives who still don't see the socks on the floor, a news story on a scholarship program for inner-city students, a class in assertiveness for older women. All of these are included here, and remind us that real life-transforming and world-transforming change is at the center of our efforts. The woman on the phone had remembered only the "sad" articles. She had forgotten all the good things that arrive between LILITH's covers.

Somehow, the default position in our lives seems to be pessimism rather than optimism. That's both a reality-based Jewish trait, I suppose, and a perspective that spurs us to action. If there are bad things going on, our mission is to fix them and repair the world. We do not wallow in "sadness" for its own sake. Nevertheless, when we are rendering our own accounts, it's sometimes a struggle to remember that there has been plenty of good news as well. The poignant eldercare pieces in this issue, for example, are certainly counterbalanced by the very positive changes wrought by visionary rabbis, the diversity in new books for Jewish girls and the news reports on engines for social justice being revved up by Jewish women young and old.

Rabbi Shira Milgrom has told of sitting with her family in a humble African-American church in a blighted part of New York City. The minister, after leading some passionately happy singing, asked the congregants to turn to one another and announce that "God has been good to me." After hearing about the service I tried saying these words out loud, to myself. I was shocked at their power. And startled to realize how infrequently I pay attention to their content.

Like what I suspect is the mode of many of you, when I take account of each of my days and weeks, I see more of the flaws than the blessings. The pile of tasks undone reproaches me, the disagreements with beloved family members sadden me, the deadlines gnaw at me, the friendly visits not made worry me. And when each of LILITH's issues is finally in my hands it seems to require an immense effort for me to take time to celebrate, to say a *shehechiyanu*, at least inwardly, to be grateful for the accomplishment and for having reached this time. My first instinct, when I hold a freshly delivered copy of the magazine in my hands, is to see the things that—with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight—I would have done differently, better. Same with other aspects of life. I can see with perfect clarity all the things that must be improved. I am trying, in my own accounting of the soul, to improve my vision, to enable myself to see the good things with equal clarity—and with some pleasure as well.

So I make a suggestion, as we put the finishing touches on this issue of LILITH. Pause as you read, and as you do your own accounting of the soul. Try to remember that we all probably have more to celebrate than to regret, or at least more good in our lives than we sometimes acknowledge. I'll try too. Sadness (as the caller says), sure, but gratitude too, for being able to work on a community that improves every season. We have to be careful not to see it or say it passively, though. It's not that our surroundings are improving by magic; rather, this is a world that we ourselves actively shape. By design, by our own choices, we work hard toward that improvement, as these articles demonstrate.

Susan

—Susan Weidman Schneider

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple… The Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b

Lilith

Editor-in-Chief **Susan Weidman Schneider**
Editor-at-Large **Susan Schnur**
Managing Editor **Naomi Danis**
Associate Editor **Sarah Blustain**
Fiction Editor **Yona Zeldis McDonough**
Poetry Editor **Marge Piercy**
Advertising Manager **Leslie Hollis Margulies**
Art Director **Laurie Douglas**
Interns **Arielle R. Derby**
Nonye Gilliard-Sullivan
Nina Owen
Caryn Tamber

Board of Directors

Frances Brandt, Barbara B. Dobkin, Deborah Fuller, Yvette Gralla, Francine Klagsbrun, Natalie Pelavin, Brenda Brown Rever, Susan Weidman Schneider, Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

Contributing Editors

Diana Bletter, E.M. Broner, Nina Beth Cardin, Elaine S. Cohen, Rachel Cowan, Sue Levi Elwell, Reena Sigman Friedman, Rela Geffen, Blu Greenberg, Judith Hauptman, Harriet Lerner, Anne Lapidus Lerner, Audrey Friedman Marcus, Judith Plaskow, Nessa Rapoport, Sandy E. Sasso, Mary Cahn Schwartz, Amy Stone

LILITH is made possible in part through the generosity of these individuals and foundations who have recently made tax-deductible contributions to LILITH Publications, Inc.

Sustainers

Susan Askanase, Eve Coulson, Deborah Fuller, Susan Bay Nimoy, Anne Harry Reicher Foundation, Evelyn Smith, Mildred & George Weissman

Sponsors

Terry Satinover Fagen

Friends

Steven A. Chester, Joyce K. Gilbert, Neil Kurshan, M/M Martin J. Linsey, Rabbi Judy Shanks, Lisa Stone, Sara S. Whaley, Miriam A. Zimmerman

Donors

Leslie A. Davis, Reva Felder, Judith Fuchs Jacobson, Rebecca Pearlman, Joy Picus, Jeanne Saletan

Assertiveness at Any Age

Tuesday mornings at 11:00 a.m., I am on the telephone. I am speaking to Rose and to Blanche, to Sylvia and to Norma, to Helen and to Gertrude. All at the same time. The average age of my phone companions is 76. We are discussing how to be more assertive in one's life. I am serving as the facilitator for this group of senior women, who are speaking from their homes, while I am teaching from my office.

© PETER MURPHY

Distance learning with Dorot.

This group phone conversation serves as the "classroom" for a course offered by University Without Walls (UWW), sponsored by DOROT, an organization in New York that serves the Jewish elderly and homebound through a myriad of programs including visitors, telephone classes, cemetery visits and holiday programs. My class is one of almost 100 courses offered each year by phone to seniors in the New York metropolitan area and Florida, with plans to expand to New Jersey this Fall.

One of the most frequent areas we explored: acting more assertively with one's adult children. One woman expressed the fear that if she speaks her mind, her children will limit her contact with the grandchildren. Another woman had difficulty saying "no" to requests to take care of her grandchildren. A number of problems had resulted from borrowing and lending money. Many women wanted to increase the communication and contact between themselves and their adult children, reporting that they often felt a distance which they wished to bridge. Some women expressed concern that their adult children wanted them to live a different lifestyle than they wished to; one woman felt her kids were trying to wear her down from her resolve to remain in her apartment in Manhattan, begging her to move to their home in the suburbs. She wanted to stay put and maintain her independence, her friendship networks and her neighborhood connections. Her daughter wanted the peace of mind of having her elderly mother close by, as well as the benefit of some child-care assistance. We helped this woman express her desires forcefully to her caring children and to remain in her own home.

Many women in the class wanted to be able to express their needs to medical professionals, whether to doctors who rushed them with their questions, or to the home health aides with whom they shared their lives. Women also discussed their frustrations about relationships with friends and neighbors. One woman felt that she was constantly lending things to her neighbor, but that these gestures were never reciprocated; in this case, we noted that the woman had difficulty in asking anyone for what she needed. Another woman was bitter that her friends rarely included her in their plans to go to lunch or the movies; the other women on the phone helped her to learn that at times she needed to be the initiator.

Most of the women felt that being assertive flew in the face of all they had ever known. They all felt that they had not been brought up to express their needs to others, but rather that they had been taught that it was their job to attend to the needs of others at all times. Some worried that becoming assertive would make them selfish or unlovable. As the course progressed, many of the women began to notice that not asserting themselves often led to resentments and dashed hopes. As a whole, these were eager and receptive students. Each week, they came back to report their results with a mixture of pride, surprise and growing comprehension of the power of speaking and acting assertively on their own behalf. They loved the sense of empowerment.

—Nechama Liss-Levinson

The University Without Walls offers courses every fall and spring, including Poetry Writing, Great Women of Classical Music, Torah Portion of the Week, and Life After Tragedy: The Road Back. To enroll in a class, or to become a volunteer faculty member in New York or New Jersey, call DOROT, toll free (877) 819-9147; www.dorotusa.org.

Good News: Women in Power

Progress in women's leadership in the Jewish community may be slow, but some new appointments by feminist fellow-travelers give us cause for hope.... **Pamela Nadell,** professor and director of the Jewish Studies Program at American University, has been named Chair of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society. The recently created Society represents the merger of some giants—YIVO, the Leo Baeck Institute and others—and will become a central address for Jewish historical research. So it's nice to have, heading a group of 80 historians and overseeing the Society's scholarship, publishing, libraries and archives, the woman whose recent book was *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1880-1985....* Baltimore Hebrew University recently announced that **Dr. Rela Mintz Geffen** will serve as its Interim President. BHU is the only college of Jewish studies that has ever been headed by a woman before: the late Dr. Norma Fields Furst...In Great Britain, **Jo Wagerman** was elected to be the first woman president in the 240-year history of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, according to an article in The Jerusalem Report. The 67-year-old will serve as lay leader of British Jewry, heading the 330-person board, which represents British communal organizations. Modern Orthodox by affiliation, Wagerman told the Jerusalem Report she plans to fight the Orthodox rabbinical courts' discrimination against women, particularly on the issue of Jewish divorce, and to reach out to the "missing generation" of unaffiliated 18- to 35-year-olds.

Wagerman recounted for the magazine her birth into London poverty, and her fight every step of the way for her education. She had a Jewish mother, she recounts, "who was anti-Semitic, abusive, neglectful and everything a Jewish mother shouldn't be." But opposing her mother's "deep-seated English working-class antipathy to education," Wagerman went on to a multi-ethnic girls' high school where she learned, she says, "to be very proud of being Jewish, to have respect for others, and that work could get you anywhere."

—Sarah Blustain

Eliyahu's tongue enters the mouth of the Shekhina
ALL KINGDOMS OF ANGER
ALL DOMINIONS OF
HARSH JUDGEMENT
FLEE FROM HER PRESENCE
(Zohar) breaking & keeping the commandments—
11/3/93
© LLOYD WOLF

In the Presence of Shekhina

The photo:

Photographer Lloyd Wolf's daughter, Emma Sky Wolf, has always constructed elaborate Halloween costumes. This photograph, taken when Emma was nine years old, grew out of her desire to be "some kind of Priestess Goddess thing" for Halloween. Emma, whose Hebrew name is BaShamayim ("in the heavens"), decided to be the Shekhina, the feminine aspect of God, and father and daughter created the colorful, intricate costume together. The photograph, one of a series, was taken at a swamp in Arlington, Virginia, chosen for its "wild" feel.

The text:

"Eliyahu's tongue enters the mouth of the Shekhina." In the photographer's concept, derived from texts of the Zohar that appear in the Friday evening service, the prophet Eliyahu will go forth to meet the Shekhina, symbolically enacting the Jewish people's union with God and the Sabbath. The words written on the photo, "All Kingdoms of Anger, All Dominions of Harsh Judgement Flee from Her Presence," also from the Friday evening service, have always resonated for Wolf. To him they hold the promise of Shabbat: upon its arrival, the demons of the work week will vanish. Wolf added the words "breaking and keeping the commandments" to reflect the contradiction between the prohibition of visually depicting God and the love of Shabbat reflected in the image.

The original photograph, along with other work by Wolf, can be seen at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. His book of photos and interviews entitled *Jewish Mothers: Strength, Wisdom, Compassion,* with interviews by Paula Ethel Wolfson, was published this year (Chronicle Books).

—Arielle R. Derby

**Hanukah, Bat Mitzvah, Birthday...
LILITH Magazine makes a great gift!
(888) 2-LILITH (254-5484)**

Not Your Ordinary Basketball Scholarship

You'd expect that when Susie Kay chooses one word to describe herself, she'd use a cheesy buzzword—empowered, determined, motivated, driven. That's how she appears. Instead, she laughs, "I'm such a yenta. I just love bringing people together."

Kay is just that. She doesn't work a full, frustrating day to come home and volunteer on her pet project for any other reason except that she lives for it. I almost hoped when I met her that she would have a flaw. I didn't find one.

For the past 10 years, 35-year-old Kay has been teaching American government to seniors at H.G. Woodson High School in Washington, D.C. All the students are black, and the number of other white teachers can be counted on one hand. She works double time, co-directing a project she created five years ago for these kids.

Hoop Dreams is an entirely volunteer project that brings inner-city youth and D.C. big shots together for year-round basketball play. The games culminate in a June tournament that raises money for scholarships, which are awarded to students for both academic achievement and effort. This June, the annual tournament was attended by 2,000 people and raised half a million dollars. Every penny of it went to the 105 Woodson students whose applications were approved.

Simply by her presence at Woodson High, Kay has been building her own bridge across the Anacostia river, Washington's dividing line between the haves and the have-nots. She tells anyone who'll listen the true secret to racial reconciliation: personal relationships. "People don't want to hear it, because it sounds so simple," commented Kay. "We're not making huge waves. We're just chipping away, day by day." Thus the Hoop Dreams tournament expanded into a full-fledged experiment in community unification. Personal relationships from the game forge internship and mentoring opportunities, and to date Kay and her team have helped match up 100 students with positions at companies like USAir and Coca-Cola.

"It has everything to do with breaking stereotypes," remarked Kay. "If everyone lets their guard down for a minute, it is clear that there are some really great people out there, that you wouldn't have otherwise met."

On one occasion, Kay brought in her friend Ari Fleicher, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee and a spokesman for the Republicans' Contract with America. The students were "a little confused. I mean, there he was, a white Republican Jew, all of the cardinal sins, and they loved him. And he couldn't get enough of them either." Fleicher now gives two $500 scholarships a year to students going on to study government, law or public service.

President Clinton has publicly praised Hoop Dreams for its racial reconciliation. A core of 100 volunteers offer mentoring and career assistance and, recently, Princeton Review became a Hoop Dreams partner, offering many students the course for free. Their scores shot through the roof (up an average of 150 points), proving to Kay that the college application process typically favors the student who can afford courses like Princeton Review.

Kay was taught tolerance and understanding at home, even before she encountered with anyone from outside her "storybook childhood." Her father was Jewish, married to an Italian Roman Catholic. Simply watching their marriage, Kay learned that two people from different backgrounds could put their cultural differences aside.

Kay remembers her first few months at Woodson as "awesome." Sometimes she felt a little out of place. "All of that melts away, though, as soon as you make your first connection. I have never had so many long, deep conversations as I did those first few months, and so many of them were about race. The students needed someone that they could talk openly with for the first time."

Kay is the first to admit it hasn't been easy at times. One of the hardest, a period she refers to as the "O.J. Simpson/ Million Man March month." School-sponsored speakers from the Nation of Islam were making anti-Semitic remarks, and the school was at "the height of anger." Kay kept working. "The reason that so many people find this so hard is that they give up after one incident. You know, there are white guys who have never had to deal with any 'ism'. They get so rattled after one comment." Her advice? "Suck it up."

When asked if all of this would have been easier if she hadn't been white and a woman and Jewish, Kay gives her signature laugh and says, "Yes, yes, yes!" Some men have suggested that they could pull off Hoop Dreams better than she. Kay always invites them to try, but nobody's done it yet. "This is not for the faint of heart."

—Susannah Jaffe

More Allegations of Abuse by Rabbis

Two years ago, LILITH Magazine published a story about widely circulating allegations of sexual misconduct against the late Shlomo Carlebach, the charismatic singing rabbi. At the time, people asked us, *Why would you publish these allegations now? What possible good can you do? And, if he did these things, can't they be dealt with privately?*

This summer, we saw strong arguments for bringing such issues to light. In June, The New York Jewish Week reported on three decades of alleged misconduct by another popular rabbi, Baruch Lanner, a leader in the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, an arm of the Orthodox Union. In meticulously reported articles, the paper's editor, Gary Rosenblatt, documented what may be scores of incidents of sexual, physical and emotional abuse over the last three decades. Speaking to a dozen alums of NCSY programs, Rosenblatt reported allegations that Lanner kissed and fondled girls, repeatedly kicked boys in the groin, and in at least one incident took a knife to a young man.

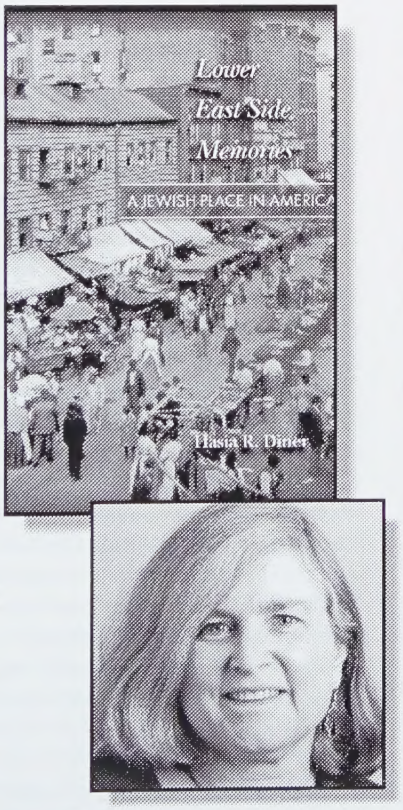
As troubling as the incidents themselves is the willful disregard that the OU showed toward this erratic behavior. As in the Carlebach case, rumors of such incidents were for years widespread—"an open secret in some Orthodox circles," Rosenblatt wrote. Officially a *bet din* (a tribunal of three rabbis) was available throughout this period to receive complaints, but Rosenblatt reported that "many said they lodged complaints with various rabbis and OU officials over the years but were rebuffed or dismissed, and they were never told to speak to a *bet din*." And the man who hired Lanner to NCSY, Rabbi Pinchas Stolper, was still reminding The Jewish Week that while he had heard reports of improper behavior, Lanner "had such a magnificent impact" on so many young people.

Earlier this year the Chicago Jewish News roiled its own community with articles about two more cases of sexual abuse. In one of them, a prominent member of the community was accused of molesting girls for more than three decades. In the other, a teacher at one of Chicago's Orthodox day schools, a rabbi, had been sexually molesting boys.

We need to note just how long these alleged crimes were allowed to go on, and how protective the communities are of their leaders, even at the expense of alleged victims. As The Jewish Week's story was being prepared, members of the Orthodox community pressed the paper not to publish, to let the community deal with this problem internally. To that end, in the wake of The Jewish Week articles the OU has appointed a commission to look into the allegations. But mark the words of one courageous leader, Rabbi Yosef Blau, who served on the *bet din*: "The pattern of protecting Baruch [Lanner] rather than his victims" goes back at least 25 years, he told The Jewish Week. It reflects "a broader inability within the Orthodox community to acknowledge improper behavior by rabbis."

"In all the worry about 'malicious gossip' and the hand-wringing about not making trouble for the rabbi," LILITH's editors wrote in a letter to The Jewish Week, "defensive members of these religious communities are missing the real point: If the allegations against Rabbi Lanner are proven true, he is not only in violation of ethics. *He is in violation of the law.*"

Lanner has resigned his post, and there have been calls from the community—including a strongly worded letter from the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance—that other leaders from the OU follow his lead. But while committees and investigations proceed, some alleged victims in the Lanner case as well as in Chicago have gone to the police with accusations of sexual molestation. Nineteen-year-old "Marcia," who at press time was pursuing charges against Lanner, told The Jewish Week she came forward because "it's got to stop somewhere." With her life deeply troubled, she said she has nothing to lose. But it's clear we all have something to gain. –*S.B.*



Lower East Side Memories

A Jewish Place in America

Hasia R. Diner

Manhattan's Lower East Side stands for Jewish experience in America. Despite the fact that most American Jews have never set foot there, the Lower East Side is firm in their collective memory. To learn when and why this dark warren of pushcart-lined streets became an icon, Hasia Diner follows a wide trail of high and popular culture.

Displaying the author's own fondness for the Lower East Side, *Lower East Side Memories* is an insightful account of one of our most famous neighborhoods and its power to shape identity.

Cloth $27.95 ISBN 0-691-00747-0 *Due September*

Princeton University Press | 800-777-4726 • WWW.PUP.PRINCETON.EDU

When Jewish Women Care for Others

by Susan Weidman Schneider

Baby boomers are folks who want to do everything right. So do Jewish women. And in middle age, the same desire to do it right extends into a new arena—taking care of elders. Because this generation is so sizeable, boomers' concerns for an aging parent or a disabled spouse have spurred a whole spate of innovative legislation, research, community programs and courses.

Whereas in past decades the focus was on medical interventions that made it possible for the elderly to live longer, and for people disabled by accidents or wasting disease to survive, now the spotlight is on the needs of the caregivers themselves. The emerging issues fall into two categories: structural changes, such as federally mandated unpaid leave from work to take care of a family member, and subtler attitudinal or emotional concerns, such as the cross-cultural tensions between a Jewish family's traditions and those of a non-Jewish hired home-care aide.

First, a quick tour of new developments to support caregiving:

■ "Informal" or family caregivers represent a huge economic resource—by some estimates more than $200 million dollars a year in unpaid labor. Understanding this, the federal Family Medical Leave Act, for example, orders companies with 50 or more employees to grant workers up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a seriously ill parent, spouse or child. Smaller firms can use the FMLA guidelines to provide support for individual employees. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, leave for employed caregivers improves job performance, decreases lateness and employee turnover, and increases job satisfaction.

■ Two recent studies acknowledge the stress that family caregivers endure. One, in the Journal of the American Medical Association, presents data that older spouses in the caregiver role are 63% more likely to die early than people without these responsibilities. Other studies have demonstrated that caregivers suffer depression, but the current research shows that the emotional, financial and physical stresses of caregiving "can have a deadly impact." On the positive side, a study being conducted by the State of New Jersey is quantifying the benefits of adult day-care centers for caregivers as well as for the clients themselves. According to Rick Greene, program manager for Wellness and Family Support in the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, caregivers who have access to such facilities are less likely to need medical care or sick leave themselves.

■ New Jersey, with one of the largest senior citizen populations in the nation, has a large cohort of Jewish seniors, some left behind in the old neighborhoods that Philip Roth has immortalized, and some brought from the Bronx and Brooklyn by adult children living in the New Jersey suburbs. A boon to caregivers has been a statewide project to provide assessments, care planning, referrals and other crucial information with one telephone call to NJ EASE (Easy Access Single Entry) at 1-877-222-3737. A phone interview about your "case" will then connect you to the state's eldercare resources and to local agencies, reports Len Fishman, former Commissioner of Health and Senior Services. The state makes need-based payments of up to $3000 per year to people caring for Alzheimer's patients at home, and uses some revenues from tobacco settlements to fund courses in "caregiver education," Rick Greene reports. The state supports "alternative family care," a parallel to foster care for seniors, and has developed therapy groups for individuals with early-stage Alzheimer's disease as they try to come to terms with its losses.

■ Long-distance caregiving is one hallmark of Jewish families. Jews live at a greater distance from their birth families than other groups, and a comparison of New York's Jewish and Italian populations confirms this. Telephone contact is greater among Jews, daily visits fewer. One consequence, says David Stern, Executive Vice President of the Jewish Association of Services for the Aged in New York, is that Jewish grandparents provide relatively little hands-on care of grandchildren, so they may be reluctant to call upon their grown children to reciprocate such care. Contact and concern exist between the generations, but the expectation of actual physical caregiving may not. For the families of seniors who do not live close to their children, the Jewish Family Service of Metrowest has created a fee-for-service program whereby the agency becomes the care manager, finding home aides, equipment, counseling, and other services.

■ Responding to the needs of caregivers for Alzheimer's patients, the NYU Alzheimer's Disease Center (212-263-5728) is about to publish its advice and resources. Watch for this new handbook on how to get the best medical care for your relative with Alzheimer's Disease by Mary Mittelman, DrPH, Cynthia Epstein, ACSW, and others. "You have to be prepared to go beyond your comfort zone in advocacy," asserts Epstein. "You may not have been a person who speaks up, but now you have to assert yourself. Alzheimer's patients cannot speak on their own behalf. Without the caregiver, they are without a translator. They are at greater risk than other [hospitalized] patients their age for a bad outcome."

■ Hospital discharge is acknowledged by all the experts in caregiving as a crisis time, for which family caregivers and health care aides are often inadequately prepared. A pilot program at Hackensack University Hospital in New Jersey sends a trained geriatric nurse to follow up the hospital stay with home visits, and answers questions by phone after discharge. We all want to appear as smart and competent as possible, and

women especially are socialized to be good girls and not ask too many questions. Susan Friedman, of the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care, says, "You've got to ask, before you leave the hospital: 'Who is my care partner? Who will help me with this transition? What's a hotline number I can call?'"

What's different for us?

One stressor for caregivers is the pull between work and caregiving duties. Since Jewish women are heavily represented in the workforce, especially in business and the professions where long hours are the norm, and are often highly invested in their work as a career, they are especially frayed by demands of caring for—or arranging care for—an aging relative. Unlike caring for your children, which abates as the children grow older, eldercare responsibilities are likely to increase over time.

"Acknowledging what is happening to your life" is one of the most difficult aspects of being a caregiver, says Carol Levine, director of the United Hospital Fund's Families and Health Care Project and editor of the U.H.F.'s just-published anthology *Always on Call: When Illness Turns Families into Caregivers*. For ten years Levine has also been the caregiver for her husband, quadriplegic after an automobile accident. "The grieving starts very early, for the person who is no longer the same, for the relationship that is no longer the same, and for yourself....Being Jewish means challenging things, asking 'Why is this happening?'—not accepting the world as it is, not thinking that it is God's will that things be this way. I can be very angry at God—He or She—and I think this attitude can be helpful to a caregiver, to call on the Jewish tradition of questioning."

Levine is very frank about the often undisclosed emotional needs of caregivers, including being able to say "I can't do it all." "You need permission not to put everything in your life on hold while you become a caregiver. [As a Jewish woman] you are raised to succeed," she adds, "and all of a sudden you can't be the successful person you want to be in this new role. It's quite humbling. You're so successful and yet so helpless to get something done in this health care system."

Levine also speaks openly about potential conflicts between families and paid aides, and suggests that improving training and benefits for home care workers is one way to keep this care consistent. The United Hospital Fund has published guidelines and a suggested contract to use when hiring a home aide ("very different from hiring a housekeeper," cautions Levine).

Cultural differences come into play as well. Susan Friedman notes that health care aides from the West Indies, for example, may be very kind towards the elder but disparaging of the employed adult daughter who hires help to do what in Island culture would have been done by a daughter herself. When these conflicts surface, they can trigger additional feelings of guilt and failure in the already burdened daughter. Family care managers need information and assistance in ameliorating these cross-cultural differences, which may play out at home or in institutional settings.

Ignorance of what elderly Jews might have experienced before coming to America plays a role in some misunderstandings. Adele Goldberg of the The Brookdale Center on Aging at Hunter College describes how her mother, a Holocaust survivor recently admitted to hospital, was assumed by nurses to be a diabetic who'd had toe amputations. No, said Goldberg, my mother's toes froze off in Siberia. The Brookdale Center (212-481-4426) has developed training to sensitize home health aides and family caregivers to some of their racial and ethnic differences, and offers a workshop on "Cultural sensitivity: training and supervision of non-Jewish professional caregivers."

Over the past several months LILITH has published several articles about issues Jewish women face as we are (too often) thrust into the role of caregiver. You can see some of these reports and first-person accounts on our website (www.lilithmag.com), or order back issues of the magazine from 1-888-2-LILITH. And if you have professional expertise in any area of eldercare, please contact Naomi Danis at LILITH to become part of our Jewish Women's Talent Bank.

Other Resources

When LILITH readers were surveyed about their own responsibilities for eldercare, almost half the respondents said they are now directly responsible for an elderly family member or friend or are affected by other caregiving responsibilities. (One 23-year-old, who looks in on her 88-year old grandmother at least every other day says, "I don't count myself the primary care, but I am there a lot.") Of the other 50% of LILITH readers—those who say they're not caring for someone right now—some had been active caregivers before a parent's death, and others expressed their looming anxieties by writing "not yet" on the survey form. Here are some ways to prepare:

Family Caregiver Alliance publishes a very informative newsletter, with interviews and reports on caregiving research, and offers an online caregiver support group.
(415) 534-3388; www.caregiver.org
690 Market St., San Francisco CA 94104

Jewish Vocational Service has a free course to certify older home health aides, and includes "specialized training in sensitivity to the needs of the family caregiver."
(973) 674-6330

National Alliance for Caregiving
(301) 718-9444; www.caregiving.org
This organization is developing a national resource center in cyberspace which will include a comprehensive listing of websites and printed material.

National Family Caregivers Association
(301) 942-6430; www.nfcacares.org

United Hospital Fund
(888) 291-4161

Donna Wagner PhD, Director of the Gerontology Program at Towson University, adds the following commercial but useful websites: **thirdage.com; webofcare.com; extendedcare.com**

Reporting on eldercare issues in Lilith is made possible by a grant from the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care.

© CARY HERZ

It Helps to Be a Feminist

How Rabbis Are Using Theory and Practice to Open Up the Synagogue

by Sarah Blustain

Time was, if you were a woman, it was a cutting-edge feminist act to become rabbi. When Sally Priesand was ordained, in 1972, by her very presence she broke the Reform movement's 125-year male-only history; Sandy Sasso joined the Reconstructionist movement's second ordination class as the only woman—and saw only a dozen follow her in as many years.

Then came the era of recognition that just "add-women-and-stir" was not a wholly satisfying solution to the "problem" of women and Judaism. This was the period—which continues to this day—of changing liturgy to include the names of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, of rediscovering women's celebrations like *Rosh Hodesh* (the new moon), and creating rituals like a daughter's baby-naming to parallel a son's *bris*.

Today, the changes are broader, and deeper. Women rabbis and women's ceremonies have become part of all but the Orthodox landscape. If you can't find them at your own synagogue, you can find them at the one next door. Since 1985 the Reconstructionist movement has ordained more women (83) than men (75). In some circles, men are complaining about the "feminization" of the synagogue, while some younger women rabbis declare that feminism's job is done.

Is this so? Nearly three decades after Priesand's groundbreaking ordination, and 25 years after this magazine was founded to address some of these very questions, feminist rabbis—men and women alike—are asking themselves this question. Has the synagogue become a satisfying, gender-sensitive, environment? Can the very structure of synagogue life be re-crafted to make it a more organic experience for the men and women who worship there? And for the rabbi who leads? Is there room for deeper feminist change in an institution whose central text, the Torah, only scantily reflects women's lives? Feminist rabbis, in pioneering congregations around the country, are saying yes.

An Inclusive Peace

Nahalat Shalom is an innovative congregation outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. Its name means "Inheritance of Peace." Co-created by iconoclastic rabbi Lynn Gottlieb in 1982, it may have been the first-ever congregation founded by a woman rabbi.

This fall, 18 years into its life, the congregation is to open the doors of its very first building, an old Baptist church on 1 1/2 acres of land. Every Sunday in recent months, the congregation has held a work party to refurbish the building. They have painted and nailed and taken down the steeple. They nurture permaculture land, tend a community garden, and raise chickens. They will be able, the rabbi hopes, to feed themselves and "to fertilize the land with chicken shit."

The evolving congregation is overtly feminist, radically democratic, determinedly environmental, artistically creative. To Gottlieb, "every value that I have

ever cherished is unfolding itself." To the members of the 180 households in her congregation, all of whom were previously unaffiliated with a synagogue, it represents a house of worship unlike anything they had ever experienced, one for which they have been willing to give up their won't-join status.

Built on an ideological cornerstone, the congregation was set up with a feminist decision-making process characterized by a surprisingly generous sharing of power uncharacteristic of most traditional congregations, and by attention to the individual needs and spiritual paths of each member. "I wanted there to be true process—everybody has a voice and there is a process for expressing it," Gottlieb explains. The synagogue has a *Va'ad*, literally a committee, instead of a board. It regularly holds community meetings in addition to weekly prayer, and in place of a Sabbath sermon, the rabbi speaks for ten minutes and then opens things up for a group conversation.

The process of deciding to invest in a building points to the remarkable attention and patience the congregation, under Gottlieb's leadership, devotes to its members' needs. The group started talking seriously about a building seven years ago. They talked in small groups, expressing their feelings. While Gottlieb was trying to maintain her role as spiritual leader to all, she also admits she had to "take people along" with the idea of a permanent site. Last fall, Gottlieb presented a sermon about "why we deserved a home for our vision of Judaism." In the end, only one family didn't contribute money toward the $324,000 project.

The valuing of the individual voice, of diverse experiences, and mutually satisfying solutions have long been tenets of feminist ideology. In addition, at Nahalat Shalom, Gottlieb believes synagogue life can be a center of creative expression—a far cry from the rigidity of traditional worship. She says she tries to nurture individuals to express "their own creative relationship to Judaism," and to this end they run an artist collective, a Sephardic Heritage Institute, a retreat center, a Jewish-Arab dialogue; publish a journal called Desert Sage; have a 22-member community klezmer band; offer *Rosh Hodesh* groups, *tikkun olam* committees, a library, kabbalah study class, and special groups for teens, men, the elderly. All these activities are run, almost entirely, by volunteers.

"You don't have to do everything," says Gottlieb about herself, echoing the words of feminist rabbis around the country, who are looking to share the power and empower their members. "You should be midwifing the spirituality and talents of everybody," she continues. "I try to have as much wisdom shine from as many people as possible."

The Feminist Path

It is certainly true that there are no other congregations exactly like Rabbi Lynn's. And yet, in its extremes, the synagogue embodies the range of feminist changes that rabbis around the country are choosing for their own communities.

Self-consciously feminist, these rabbis—leading congregations large and small, old and new, Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Renewal and unaffiliated—have thrown out the old model for how to shepherd their flocks. There goes the stately desk in the Rabbi's Study. There goes the Rabbi's Study. There goes absolute *halachic* authority, and with it the formal sermon and the notion that the rabbi is the only person in the community learned enough to conduct services or preside over funerals. (How else can we say it? There go the trappings of the patriarchy.) In its place, these rabbis are looking to encourage intimacy and inclusion rather than intimidation, democracy rather than hierarchy, and working to be spiritual guides rather than religious taskmasters.

In the larger world of rabbinic practice, these feminist-based changes have fueled a trend. Currently there are some 40 projects under way in the various movements of Judaism in what is called, in the new terminology, "synagogue transformation."

These rabbis are looking to encourage intimacy over intimidation, democracy over hierarchy.

©MARLA MARITZER

Rabbi Shohama Weiner ordaining a rabbinical candidate at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Opposite, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb.

These new efforts are driven by the idea that attending synagogue doesn't have to feel like a dry routine, and by the recognition that obligation alone no longer moves Jews toward observance. What draws liberal Jews in today are opportunities for engagement, spiritual fulfillment and a sense that Judaism is not dictating laws but relating to their own stories. The synagogue reformers are also driven by the belief that the synagogue can in fact—after long desuetude—become the center of Jewish life once again. The programs, like Synagogue 2000 or the Experiment in Congregational Education, are not, for the most part, explicitly feminist. Though they attend to the very feminist ideals noted above, they are not often heard crediting their innovations to feminism.

"Much of the success of the feminist movement is reflected in the fact that so many feminist principles have become second nature," comments 32-year-old Rabbi Adina Lewittes, who helped create the very feminist Kol Haneshamah synagogue in New Jersey three years ago. "Those principles have become absorbed almost unconsciously."

And yet, for every synagogue engaging in its own reform there are certainly many more following traditional practices. Deliberate consciousness is necessary to suggest that the old structures can be replaced with essential democracy, that the silent congregant can be given a voice, that communities will benefit when the traditionally powerful share ideas and power with the traditionally impotent. Feminist principles all. And so it is for all these reasons that the synagogue transformation from hierarchy to intimacy is—in its roots, its ideal and its details—a feminist endeavor.

Toppling the Hierarchy

Kol Haneshamah, in Englewood, New Jersey, was founded three years ago by a handful of families looking to provide "alternative models of community." Adina Lewittes, a Conservative rabbi, was part of those initial meetings, and she recalls the words that frequently came up in conversation: warmth, fellowship, informality, deeply spiritual. "I wanted to avoid replicating the hierarchy that dominates many synagogues structures," to create a structure that would "reflect diversity," she says.

In the beginning, that meant praying together without formal leadership, without a synagogue, without an official rabbi, without joining one of the major streams of Judaism. But as the community grew, deeply conscious conversations started about how to identify "leadership" and still adhere to an anti-hierarchical model. They've debated how to fill the community's seven-person head committee, the *Va'ad*: Is it more democratic to elect people, to require participation with membership, or to take nominations that are then chosen by lottery?

It may sound like a mundane discussion, but a satisfying *emotional* outcome is key to creating the kind of community they are striving for. That's why they hold monthly community meetings for members to express their feelings on everything from *kashrut* policy to whether to affiliate with a particular movement to how they envision the congregation's ideal physical space. That's why the congregation spent nine months "learning" before deciding to join the Conservative movement.

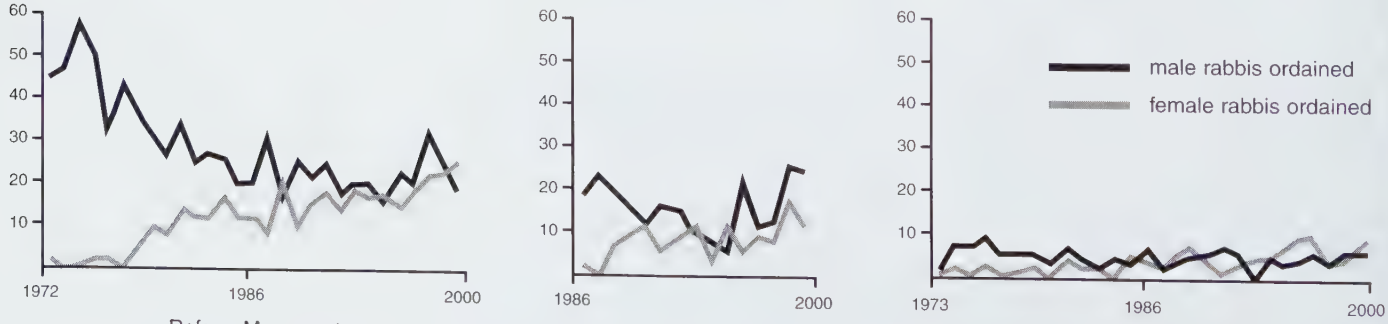
Of course, this chronic democracy is not without its difficulties. As a feminist concept, comments Rabbi Jane Litman, a progressive San Francisco-area rabbi, the idea of consensus may have gone too far. Process sometimes paralyzes decision-making. Indeed, says Lewittes, in the attempt to make decisions, "sometimes people's dreams get pushed aside."

Challenging the hierarchy of the synagogue doesn't only bear on decision-making processes. As congregants become more invested in the synagogue, they begin to function as a community rather than a weekly prayer meeting. The weighty responsibility for the good works of the *shul*, be they visiting the sick, leading services or teaching the children, is taken partly off the shoulders of the rabbi and distributed to congregants. It's a win-win solution: members feel engaged, and overworked rabbis get a break.

Many of the rabbis we spoke with, all of whom self-identified as feminists, said they only lead services part of the time, having trained members of the congregation to lead in synagogue, at a *shiva* and elsewhere. Increasingly, congregants are taking a role in tutoring children for bar/bat mitzvah, teaching classes and other activities previously designated for the rabbi. No turf battles here. At Suzanne Griffel's gay/lesbian outreach synagogue, Or Chadash, in Chicago, each person is invited to participate in High Holiday services. "Every summer we call every person in the congregation who hasn't responded to offer them a reading on the High Holidays," she explains.

Not all of the congregants in these feminist *shuls* are young, gay or even self-consciously progressive. Margaret Moers Wenig is the rabbi at Beth Am, the People's

Women Enter the Rabbinate



Reform Movement:
Hebrew Union College

Total: 351 women, 829 men

Conservative Movement:
Jewish Theological Seminary/University of Judaism

Total: 114 women, 231 men

The Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College

Total: 97 women, 134 men

Temple, in New York's Washington Heights, created 50 years ago by German-Jewish refugees who still make up about half of the congregation. When Wenig took a six-month sabbatical, she offered workshops to train people how to lead. Forty people joined, and when she came back, "they didn't want to stop."

Other congregations, working practically to relieve the pressure on the rabbi and ideologically to break down spiritual hierarchies, have created rabbinic partnerships. "We're modeling the sharing of spiritual power," comments Shira Milgrom, co-senior rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Westchester, New York.

Elka Abrahamson shared the pulpit at St. Paul's Mt. Zion Temple for seven years with her husband, Martin Zinkow, co-senior rabbi. They had four children when she realized that "working myself silly just wasn't going to work for anyone....I had to figure out a more reasonable life," and also needed to "teach the congregation that this was okay." She says people were confused at first about who the "real" rabbi was, but within a few years the congregation itself elected co-presidents. At a conference, Abrahamson recalls, someone said to her and her husband, "So who wears the pants?" A congregant interrupted, "Oh, we don't think that way anymore."

At Temple Emanuel, a large Reform congregation of 1,000 families in Beverly Hills and possibly the largest with a woman rabbi at its head, Rabbi Laura Geller has been leading the feminist charge. Through a Reform synagogue transformation program that is working with more than a dozen shuls, the Experiment in Congregational Education, she's been thinking and talking a lot about how to make the rabbi less a figure on high. The synagogue's associate rabbi, Jonathan Aaron, started four years ago as an assistant, and they are now imagining a future in which he is "co-rabbi." Making it work "has a lot to do with chemistry," comments Geller, "but is also has an ideological component. You have to be willing to give up a certain kind of power, and to me that's a feminist model."

Legal Authority or Spiritual Guide?

When Rabbi Jo David arrived at her pulpit in Freeport, Long Island, she found the rabbi's study occupied. It held an enormous desk and an enormous black leatherette chair, clearly more suitable, she thought, for the outgoing rabbi's 6' than her 5'2." Thinking the desk a "huge barrier," she asked for different furniture. The congregation, she says, was offended—and refused—so she got the super to help her find alternative furnishings.

BILL ARON

Rabbi Laura Geller is spurring feminist change for 1,000 families.

"I never understood how you could have a rabbi's office where the rabbi sits behind the desk," she explains. Indeed the rabbi's study has often been a place of awe, and some fear, a bit like the principal's office but with a sacred aura as well. So it becomes key for feminist rabbis who are seeking to refute the top-down model of the rabbinate to change the very space they work. Rabbi Lewittes' *shul* in New Jersey currently doesn't have a permanent home, and she takes pleasure holding those rabbi's study meetings in her "home, the park, or in a sushi bar."

As these rabbis come out of the study, and off of the *bima*, they need to deal with questions about their authority. If decisions are being made communally, should they be the only arbiters of Jewish law? If they are seeking democracy, are they wrong to put down their foot on an issue? What does it mean to have authority in a community where, ideally, every voice counts equally?

"What is a feminist model of synagogue transformation?" reflect Geller, whose work with ECE has been going on for three years. "The central notion of transformation is that the rabbi is not at the center, and that is a feminist notion."

Most of these rabbis agree that their goal is to serve more as a spiritual guide than to tell people what to do, and that to do their work best is to empower their congregants without disempowering themselves. A rabbinical school teacher once told Rabbi Litman, the rabbi educator of Berkeley's Congregation Beth El, that he felt most like a rabbi when he told people *no, you can't do that according to Jewish law.* She spends a lot of time permitting rather than forbidding, telling people that "Jewish tradition speaks a lot more multivocally than you might have thought."

Tirzah Firestone is by all measures a radical rabbi of the Jewish Renewal stripe. Her recent book, *Roots in Heaven,* recounts her search for the feminine in Judaism, and she did the same in her pulpit at the Jewish Renewal Congregation of Boulder. "Mostly the rabbi is someone who is going to help you connect to your inner Torah," she says. Firestone opened every meeting with a prayer or a song, to help "everyone get into the same place. ... We all humble ourselves in the face of the Shekhinah [the feminine aspect of God] first." And should the meeting get testy, she'll remind everyone that

The Personal Side of the Profession

Tirzah Firestone recently resigned her pulpit Jewish Renewal Congregation of Boulder. Starting a new marriage, inheriting four children, and publishing her book *Roots in Heaven*, "It became clear that congregational duties were beginning to split me."

We've heard that before, from Superwomen in every profession. While feminist rabbis make change in congregational life, they're trying to redesign the profession as well. Comments Rabbi Elka Abrahamson, "Women have pushed that question of balanced lives up higher on the agenda."

In addition to the lack of balance, women rabbis note lower pay and lack of respect. One young rabbi told LILITH "there are sometimes more comments about what I wear than what I say" and that "women rabbis are still seen as women first and rabbi second." Melanie Aron, from a Silicon Valley synagogue, admits people sometimes do "slip up....They have to blink their eyes twice and realize that just because I wear a dress doesn't mean I'm support staff," she says.

Rabbi Yael Ridberg

"Often women rabbis encounter double messages," comments Rabbi Yael Ridberg, the 31-year-old associate rabbi at the West End Synagogue in New York. "They want you to be passionate but not overbearing, they want you to be [an] authority but not beat them over the head with something, they want you to be open and caring but also professional." Ridberg has nothing but words of enthusiasm for her egalitarian Reconstructionist congregation, where decision-making is often by consensus and feminine God-language is a real option. And yet there is more to do. "I have the degree, I have the job, I have the business cards; now I think it has to be a paradigm shift—we cannot assume that Judaism is finished evolving simply because women are rabbis. There is still much work to be done in the liberal communities." —*SB*

their business is "for spirit, not personal" and requests, "let's breathe now."

In her Englewood congregation, Lewittes tries to open up debate over religious decisions—to take for herself "a vote, and not a veto"—providing she is comfortable that the alternatives being discussed all fall within Jewish law. In one discussion about the role of non-Jews in the congregation, for instance, she sets *halachic* parameters by saying that non-Jews would not be called to the Torah. "I think it does stick out," she says about those times when she asserts her authority, "but I also think it gives people a sense of comfort" to know there are boundaries. She herself has had to recognize that "to be powerful is not anti-feminist; asserting authority is consistent with leadership; and that strength does not necessarily mean dictatorship."

People's Life Stories Count

One effect of these anti-hierarchical changes is that the congregation is no longer dominated by a few large personalities—the rabbi booming from the pulpit or the cantor bellowing operatically. Congregants differentiate themselves and, by their contributions to the synagogue community, their personal narratives also become reflected in the communal life.

In part this means that these feminist rabbis reach beyond the traditional-family-in-search-of-a-Hebrew-school toward gays and lesbians, the intermarried, ethnic minorities, the elderly, the childless and the single person. In part it also means recognizing that the synagogue needs to connect with each individual as a person with stories and a particular history. In Litman's California synagogue, the "Sisterhood is revitalized, and has given away running the gift ship and baking cookies" in favor of other activities like the "Communiversity," a two day sharing of women's skills: bee keeping, investing, medieval Jewish women. In Wenig's Washington Heights congregation, when a congregant was mourning a relative who had been mentally ill, the congregation and rabbi created a liturgy for a Shabbat on mental illness.

Wenig's stories are plentiful, each one the lesson of how a personal journey became meaningful to her entire congregation. In her effort to "give voice to those whose voices previously had not been heard," Wenig (author of the now classic essay "God Is a Woman and She Is Growing Older") and a group of elderly women wrote a *Pirkei Imahot,* Lessons of the Mothers, to parallel the traditional Lessons of the Fathers. The congregation also has created a notebook of reflections to read before the Mourner's Kaddish. A man who was deaf spoke to congregation about raising a deaf child, and inspired them to raise money for assisted hearing devices; today they are used by the elderly, and even by people who leave the service for a moment, say to change a baby's diaper. Another time, a gay boy was beaten up in a nearby park and the congregants, many of them remembering their lives in Germany, took care of him, "because they know what it's like to be beat up in the streets."

Over and over, Wenig tells stories of individuals crossing boundaries of age, sex, orientation, experience. One day, on an anniversary of Kristallnacht, a woman spoke about her experiences in Germany. A young woman recognized that her own parents had lived through the same event in the same town. Her parents, she told the woman speaking, had never shared their past. Then the speaker realized she had never told her own children about that time.

Wenig's congregants have been her partners in these events. But even when things are difficult, these rabbis say, they try to create warmth and human interaction. Rabbi David, who tussled with her congregation over the furniture, recalls a phone call from a non-congregant, a man wanting a visitor "so he wouldn't be alone when he died." She asked a woman and her family "to kind of adopt him." When that became an effort, the family "shared" the man with another family. He gave contributions to the *shul* and had his first *aliyah* at one of their bar mitzvahs. He told Rabbi David his life was changed through this, and when he died, "it was very special because we were all part of this family."

These are, clearly, boom times for the increasing number of Jews who are looking to participate in Judaism, and not just follow its laws. This kind of holistic, spiritual, approach, may keep people involved for their whole lives, not just when they need a facility for a wedding, a funeral or a child's Jewish education. They are precious for the rabbi as well. "The advantage I had," says Wenig, "is that because everyone else was granted a voice, then I had a voice, too." A voice, she means, as a person, not just as the Rabbi. ■

"Let My Husband Die"

by Ann Moliver Ruben

Gershon and I met as teenagers and by the tug on my heart, I knew we belonged together. We were both born in Pittsburgh. I was almost 16 and he was 18 at the time. What fun we had together. We jitterbugged to tunes that spilled out of a lit-up flashing jukebox. He had rhythm and a serious smile. He was generous with the spending money given to him as an only child. He paid to take me to my favorite Bette Davis movie and I remember how we licked on the same chocolate ice cream cone afterwards.

During his freshmen year at college, he took a job at Kaufman's Department Store. With the money he earned as a stock boy and with the discount he was given as an employee, he bought me a Zircon engagement ring for $75.00. I was in heaven. His parents had a party to celebrate our commitment to each other and I remember his favorite cousin, Georgia, holding my ring up to the light and declaring it wasn't a real diamond. So what! I knew eventually we would get married and that's all that mattered to me. I wanted to be with him the rest of my life.

Gershon was helping his parents decorate their children's store for the Christmas holidays when Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese. He rushed to my house to tell me that President Roosevelt had declared war on Japan. He was a junior in college, and he quickly enlisted in the Army Air Force. "I'm going to help end this damn war," he told me as he left for basic training. I cried at work. I cried at home. I missed him. Finally I earned a one-week vacation as a secretary at Twentieth Century Fox and his parents generously gave me a gift of a train ticket to visit Gershon. The first thing I did when I got to South Dakota was to ask him to marry me so I could stay with him.

In South Dakota at the time, all males had to be 21 to marry. Females only had to be 14. So while I was 18 and could decide for myself, we had to ask the parents of 20-year-old Gershon for permission. They agreed, and a week later we were married by a drunken judge in the courthouse of Minnehaha County. The judge couldn't stand up, let alone pronounce Gershon's first name.

The marriage license issued just 57 years ago now lies tucked away in Miami Lakes as proof that this momentous occasion took place. The happy story that had been our lives ended three years ago, when Gershon had a devastating major stroke. It was his third stroke in a year. This one was different. I found him unconscious on the floor of our family room, bleeding profusely from his left ear. I had been away from home for less than an hour.

My first nightmare began as soon as I called 911. The ambulance came, and because Gershon was bleeding, the medics called the police. The police suspected foul play, and I assured them that I found nothing out of place when I came home, but they insisted on checking things out. I left them and followed the ambulance to the hospital to face my second nightmare.

Gershon and Ann Ruben

Because I knew he would not want to be put on a ventilator, I told the doctors in the emergency room that Gershon had a living will. The two of us had taken the time to sign a document that indicated we did not want to be put on any life support system just to keep us alive if our lives would have no quality. We also had completed legal documents in which I was appointed to act as health care surrogate. These legally executed papers were to be used in case either of us was unable to make competent decisions. But those legal documents were worthless. By the time I was permitted to see Gershon, now a patient in the intensive care unit, he was already hooked up to a ventilator.

I was very upset with his doctors at the hospital because they refused to listen to me. Later that evening, I hurried home to find his living will and bring it to the hospital. As I

he next nightmare began with a phone call, which infor Charges had bee

was searching for it, the phone rang. Nightmare number three. The call was from a caseworker from the Department of Children and Families informing me that charges had been filed against me for abandoning and neglecting my husband. Because my behavior would undergo a 60-day investigation, I had to agree to keep Gershon on a ventilator for at least 24 hours. Finding myself between a rock and a hard place, I agreed. When the 24 hours were about to end, I got a call from his primary care physician telling me that he needed to keep Gershon on a ventilator for at least another 72 hours. With the investigation hanging over my head, I felt compelled to agree. But after four days had elapsed, Gershon's doctors kept him on full-time life support, all without my permission. Six days later he regained consciousness on his own and within a couple days he was discharged from the hospital and entered a nursing home. He was unable to walk or talk. He did not know his name or mine and had no clue about what happened to him. The charges of abandoning and neglecting were dropped as "unfounded." At the end of November, I wrote his three doctors the following letter:

1943

"Soon it will be three months since my husband, Gershon Ruben, had his third stroke in less than a year. The last cerebral hemorrhage he suffered on September 8th, 1997, was the most serious. He was in a coma for over a week and because the two of you were unable to agree that he was "terminal" he was kept on full life support for well over 24 hours and his Living Will and my surrogate power over his health care were ignored.

"As a result of your decisions, the man I married over 54 years ago and the human being that I have deeply loved no longer has any quality of life. He is 'warehoused' at St. Francis/Mt. Sinai Nursing Home completely dependent on others. He cannot wash himself, shave himself, dress himself, stand up or walk on his own, nor can he make himself understood when he speaks. He is maintained by an abdominal feeding tube since his unable to swallow. He cries continually and hollers out my name, 'Annie,' when

A Prayer of Trust

Sometimes we must make the difficult decision of removing our loved one from life support, either in keeping with end-of-life wishes, or because his or her brain has ceased to function. Navah Harlow, a patient advocate in New York City, wrote the following prayer for children to say when they give the order to turn off the life support machines for their parents:

Aveenu sheh-ba-sha-mayim—
Our Father in heaven—

Today is the day that I have spoken for my beloved mother/father even as she/he spoke for me when I was a child without words, without understanding. He/she anticipated my needs and protected me from harm when I was yet unable to negotiate my life independently.

Today she/he is no longer capable of speech, of comprehension, of expressing his/her love for me as she/he has always done through words and through actions.

Today I have spoken as I promised I would. I have articulated his/her wishes as she/he has articulated them to me over these past few years. We both hoped that this day would never come. We both hoped that Your will would be done quietly, peacefully. But that was not meant to be. The inevitable outcome of his/her illness was postponed by hopes and dreams and medical technology. We know today that nothing can help. The life that was acceptable to him/her is no longer accessible. The process of dying is being prolonged.

Today I have spoken as I promised. I have fulfilled the mitzvah, the commandment, of honoring my father/mother.

He/she lived with integrity, has acted righteously and has spoken truthfully. Take him/her, then, unto Your sanctuary, let her/him repose upon Your holy mountain.

Adapted from Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin's The Tapestry of Jewish Time: A Spiritual Guide to Holidays and Life-Cycle Events (*Behrman House, $24.95, 800-221-2755). Cardin offers explanations and reflections on the Jewish holidays and life-cycle events, along with innovative rituals and reflections from Jews around the world.*

me:
ed against me for abandoning and neglecting my husband

I am with him or not with him. I wonder deep in my heart if any of you would want to trade places with him. I know I would not want that for myself…

"It is inconceivable to me that a complaint was filed against me with the Department of Children and Families citing me for 'abandoning and neglecting' my husband. I was told the charges were diligently investigated over a 60-day period and were judged to be 'unfounded' by them. I shall always wonder if one of you was responsible for the filing of this complaint since I pushed you to carry out Gershon Ruben's wishes as specified in his Living Will. I want all of you to be aware of the grave disservice you have committed against Gershon Ruben and his family."

Needless to say, not one of his doctors responded to my letter, but I shall always be grateful that I wrote it. It made an impact on members of Florida's first panel convened by the governor to study the end-of-life care when I read it to them. I quote from it in talks I give at senior citizen centers to alert others to the reality that most of the time doctors in hospitals do not honor living wills. I remind them that Florida law, like those of 19 other states, declares that a patient can only be removed from a ventilator if two doctors declare the patient terminal. The Sun Sentinel in Ft. Lauderdale and The Daily Business Review in Miami have published an article I wrote in which I encouraged professional counselors to help their clients prepare living wills that work. I am not a bit bashful about sharing what I'm living through because I hope that it never happens to anyone else.

Even though I finally found a lawyer willing to file a "wrongful life" suit against Gershon's three doctors and the hospital, the case was dropped because no doctor was willing to testify on my husband's behalf. One well respected professor did carefully examine Gershon's medical records. She concluded that "he should have had his life support withdrawn on day four and certainly by day five," and that it was "unlikely that he would have survived at that point without a ventilator." However, she refused to be involved in a trial. Other doctors and professors of bioethics agree that Gershon was grievously wronged, but they also tell me that in Florida it is not illegal to do what they did in disregarding my wishes and those of my husband.

Gershon's three doctors will probably never face any legal action for their decision. But more than anything, I wish they had the courage to visit Gershon in the nursing home and tell him that never again will they ignore a person's living will.

I truly believe that when our life here on earth ends, we all go onto another life; it would surely have been better than the one he is living now. I loved him enough to let him go.

Dr. Ann Moliver Ruben is an award-winning psychologist, an educator, author, public speaker and feminist. She specializes in marriage and family therapy and parenting education.

The Promise

by Sharon Olds

With the second drink, at the restaurant,
holding hands on the bare table
we are at it again, renewing our promise
to kill each other. You are drinking gin,
night-blue juniper berry
dissolving in your body, I am drinking Fume,
chewing its fragrant dirt and smoke, we are
taking on earth, we are part soil already,
and always, wherever we are, we are also in our
bed, fitted naked closely
along each other, half passed out
after love, drifting back and
forth across the border of consciousness, our
bodies buoyant, clasped. Your hand
tightens on the table. You're a little afraid
I'll chicken out. What you do not want
is to lie in a hospital bed for a year
after a stroke, without being able to
think or die, you do not want
to be tied to a chair like my prim grandmother,
cursing. The room is dim around us,
ivory globes, pink curtains
bound at the waist, and outside
a weightless bright lifted-up
summer twilight. I tell you you don't
know me if you think I will not
kill you. Think how we have floated together
eye to eye, nipple to nipple,
sex to sex, the halves of a single creature
drifting up to the lip of matter
and over it—you know me from the bright, blood-
flecked delivery room, if a beast
had you in its jaws I would attack it, if the ropes
binding your soul are your own wrists I will cut them.

THE PROMISE APPEARS IN *BLOOD, TIN, STRAW*, PUBLISHED BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, 1999

What to Do

How can you make your own wishes known when you might not be able to communicate them in a time of medical crisis? Should you write them down now, while you're still sentient? Tell a friend, a relative, your partner, your doctor? Experts answer: All of the above.

When writing an "advance directive," be cautious about the specifics.

Some experts suggest, as does Carol E. Sieger of Partnership for Caring, that you fill out a highly specific advance directive. She advises that to ensure that your doctor or health care surrogate will comply with your wishes, you should describe exactly what medical treatments you want performed or withheld. Familiarize yourself with medical technologies, she advises, such as mechanical ventilation and artificial nutrition, so you can request what you want—and what you don't. Others take the opposite tack, advising people to appoint a trusted health-care surrogate but not to spell out in detail what procedure you want followed or avoided, precisely because, alerts bioethicist Dr. Marion Danis of the National Institutes of Health, you cannot predict what medical situation you'll encounter. You may have instructed, for example, that you do not want to be put on a ventilator. But some drugs administered may have a side effect that requires very short term use of a ventilator—a day, say—after which you will be fine. Under such circumstances, would you *really* want not to have that intervention? Highly specific directives written in advance may not match your wishes at the time of medical decision-making. The best current advice, according to Carol Levine, director of the Families and Health Care Project at the United Hospital Fund, is to use a health care proxy, because the specific advance directives you've written down in advance may be constructed in ways that just don't fit the exact situation. "The more you spell out the more likely the hospital will say, 'Well, *this* is not spelled out,'" so they will do the procedure not mentioned in the directive. Levine cautions that "There's a sense of security in filling out advance directives, but it is a false security."

Review your advance directive with your doctors.

Give your physician a copy of any advance directive and the name and number of anyone you have appointed to act for you should you become incapacitated. Discuss your wishes with your physician. Make sure that she understands your decisions and will comply with your advance directive, says Ann Moliver Ruben after her own sad experience. Some doctors will not honor a "Do Not Resuscitate" order; others will remove artificial ventilation but not a feeding tube. Ask.

Keep a copy of your advance directive, or instructions on where to find it, in your wallet along with the name of your surrogate.

If disaster strikes when you are away from your regular doctor or health care surrogate, your wishes can still be honored.

Discuss your wishes with your family.

Much like the decision to become an organ donor, your end-of-life preferences are more likely to be honored if those closest to you know about them, says Naomi Naierman of the American Hospice Foundation. These are often difficult conversations to initiate, but there are many situations where family members are confused about what a relative's desires really are, so you are sparing those you care for by clarifying your position for them while you are able.

Choose an assertive surrogate.

Your health care proxy may have to challenge doctors and make tough decisions, so it is important to pick someone who will be a strong advocate for you. Remember that the laws on how to designate your surrogate differ state by state.

Appoint only one health care surrogate.

Multiple surrogates may disagree on how best to carry out your requests. Try to designate one or more alternate surrogates, to be consulted if your primary choice is incapacitated or absent.

What to do when you have to make health care decisions for others.

Many of us tend to think about medical decision-making only in times of crisis. We slough off the issue, sometimes by imagining that a parent, a child, a spouse or a close friend will take over and do the right thing for us if we are incapacitated. Working through their own reluctance and denial, a group of six women friends in their 50s gathered recently to prepare and sign a set of mutual (or nearly mutual) health-care proxy agreements. One of them is an attorney who crafted the language of the documents, one pair was a lesbian couple concerned that their relationship did not give them legal standing to make health care decisions for one another. All were friends of longstanding, unmarried, had no children, and had almost no surviving relatives of an older generation on whom they could depend.

"People really were their true selves," reported one of the women. "I wanted someone who would to decide to pull the plug on me immediately, but I did *not* want to make that decision for anybody else. So I didn't agree to be anyone's surrogate. You have to be honest, the way you would be when someone asks if you will be the legal guardian for a child. We took the choosing and the signing very seriously, then marked the event with Champagne and salmon mousse." When asked where they put the documents, one woman said that hers was filed away with all her other important papers. Then she realized, when pressed, that all her careful preparation would be for naught if unless she stashed at least the name and phone numbers of her designated health care proxy in her wallet. —*Susan Weidman Schneider*

Prepare for the task, if you can.

A reassuring map through the process of accepting—and acting on—the responsibility of making decisions for someone else's well-being is a pamphlet on *Making Health Care Decisions for Others: A Guide to being a Health Care Proxy or Surrogate*. (There is also a companion booklet to give your doctor—same title, with the subhead *A Quick Reference for Physicians*, and it comes with a handy wallet-sized card.) Here you're coached in how to make decisions for another—by following explicit statements, figuring out the patient's wishes, or deciding how to act in the patient's best interest when there are no clear guidelines. The suggestions are clear and compassionate, reminding the surrogate that "People often have the capacity to make some decisions and not others....Discussions in moments of clear thinking can yield ethically and legally valid decisions" even if the patient's capacity for understanding fluctuates. One important clue is "start making decisions before the patient loses capacity," meeting the doctors and letting the medical staff know your role. Another welcome piece of advice comes when there are conflicts with the patient's family or disputes with the medical team: "A legally appointed proxy's authority supersedes that of any other self-declared decision makers, including family members." These were created by the Division of Bioethics, Montefiore Medical Center, New York; (718) 920-6226; www.bioethicsmontefiore.org.

Choose hospitals wisely.

If you are acting as a health care surrogate for someone and the doctors treating her refuse to honor her advance directive, you have the right to take her to another hospital. For those with terminal illnesses, hospice care may be a viable choice.

All accredited hospitals have medical ethics committees; they can help.

If the treating physician will not honor your loved one's living will, you can bring your case before the ethics committee. If you need help making decisions or resolving disputes, ask to see the bioethics consultant, patient representative, ombudsman, social worker or rabbi.

Where to Turn

Aging with Dignity
Attn: Paul Malley
P.O. Box 1661
Tallahassee, FL 32302
(888) 5-WISHES
www.agingwithdignity.org
Offers "Five Wishes" advance directive form, which can be downloaded. Honored in 33 states and the District of Columbia.

Americans for Better Care of the Dying
4125 Albemarle Street NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20016
(202) 895-9485
www.abcd-caring.org
Does public advocacy on patient care, policy and regulatory issues; is a good source of referrals relating to serious, chronic and fatal illness concerns.

Partnership for Caring:
America's Voices for the Dying
1035 30th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
(800) 989-9455
www.partnershipforcaring.org
Offers assistance in obtaining, preparing and using advance directives.

RAND Center to Improve Care of the Dying
1200 South Hayes Street
Arlington, VA 22202
(703) 413-1100, ext. 5457
Is geared toward the academic research community; offers referrals for public to experts; provides speakers on medical, ethical, spiritual and policy end-of-life issues.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations —Department of Jewish Family Concerns
633 3rd Avenue
7th floor
New York, NY 10017
(212) 650-4000
Offers "A Time to Prepare," the UAHC booklet on end of life issues.

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Book Service
155 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10010
(800) 594-5617
www.uscj.org
Offers "Jewish Medical Directives on Health Care," an advance directive issued by the Rabbinical Assembly and approved by the Conservative movement.

What It Means

Advance directive: Describes two kinds of legal documents, **living wills** and **medical powers of attorney**. These are papers which allow a person to give instructions about future medical care in case he or she becomes unable to participate in medical decisions because of serious illness or incapacity. Each state regulates the use of advance directives differently.

Living will: A type of advance directive in which an individual documents her or his wishes about medical treatment should he or she be at the end of life and unable to communicate. It may also be called a **directive to physicians, health care declaration,** or **medical directive.** A living will guides family members and doctors in deciding how aggressively to use medical treatments to delay death.

Medical power of attorney: Allows an individual to appoint someone else to make decisions about his or her medical care if he or she is unable to communicate. It may also be called a **health care proxy, durable power of attorney for health care,** or **appointment of a health care agent.** The person appointed may be called a **health care agent, surrogate, attorney-in-fact** or **proxy.**

Surrogate decision-making: Surrogate decision-making laws allow an individual or group of individuals (usually family members) to make decisions about medical treatments for a patient who has lost decision-making capacity and did not prepare an advance directive. In some states, a social service agency, such as Jewish Family Services, can be appointed surrogates or guardians.

—resources compiled by Caryn Tamber

GLOSSARY ADAPTED FROM MATERIAL FROM THE PARTNERSHIP FOR CARING

Reporting on caregiving issues made possible by the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care.

Equality Soldiers On in Israel:

Protecting Women from Sex Slavery and Harassment

by Helen Schary Motro

In a country usually fixated on survival, people in Israel this spring were busy speculating about sex. If, when and how, they wanted to know, did a Cabinet minister fondle subordinates and young job seekers? Would he be made to pay for it? They were jolted out of complacency to hear that Amnesty International had targeted Israel as a major center where thousands of women are lured into the country to find themselves imprisoned as sex slaves.

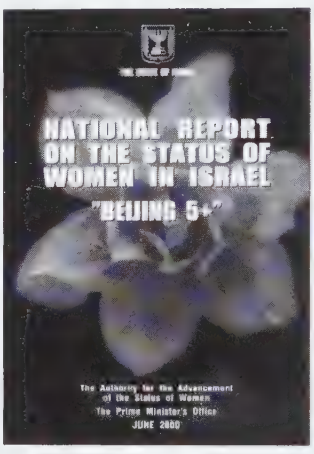
Sexual exploitation in Israel is not new. What is news is that the seamy underside of sex revealed itself this year to bombard Israeli headlines and preoccupy the public.

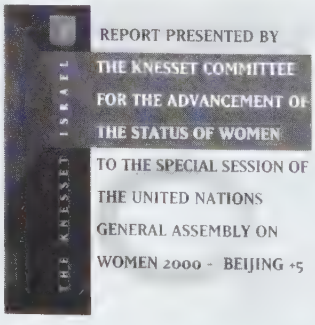
One aspect, sexual harassment, exemplifies the inroads that strong legislation can make in tackling an endemic problem. On another side, this summer saw an effort to create adequate laws to stop the lucrative scourge of trafficking in women, which has flourished in the underworld of the Holy Land.

For decades, sexual exploitation of women in the military, the workplace, the political arena and indeed in any public or private forum was viewed as a fact of life. Israeli women knew that they could expect to be accosted by their bosses, that army jeeps were dangerous venues, that professors had wide license to make intrusive remarks, that hospital nurses were fair game for anybody wearing a white coat.

How did they cope? In the vast majority of cases by silence, by shame, by keeping a low profile, and sometimes by playing the very game they had been unwillingly drafted into. One mature Jerusalem attorney recalls that when she was a young lawyer a senior jurist repeatedly put his hand on her thigh. Complaining seemed out of the question: "What could I do?" asks the woman who until today is too nervous about the man's power to name him. "I was just a nobody, and he was a leader of the profession."

The sweeping 1998 Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law is considered the most progressive legislation of its kind in the world.





Harassment is now a crime bringing with it imprisonment, fines and punitive compensation in addition to allowing parallel civil remedies for damages. Sexual harassment is defined in the widest terms: sexual contact, repeated unwanted sexual speech, propositions or innuendo, sexual blackmail, or debasing reference to someone's gender. Consent is no defense if the harasser is in a position of direct authority over the victim or when minors or patients are involved.

Opponents of the bill predicted the new law would open the floodgates, but in fact 1999 saw only 27 criminal files opened in the civil service, following 23 military indictments in 1998.

Not everybody takes the law seriously. In March a young female employee filed a police complaint against veteran army general and current government minister Yitzhak Mordechai. His reply—"I don't deal with nonsense!"—was a telling throwback to the old Israeli attitude. By the next week Mordechai had taken a leave of absence. When the police recommended indictment he resigned from the Knesset, which stripped him of parliamentary immunity. He is now awaiting trial on charges of committing an indecent act using force and sexual harassment.

How did this sea change come about? Starting with the Women's Rights Law of 1988, Israel has enacted a string of legislation promoting equality. These laws include the 1993 law appointing women to the boards of directors of government corporations, a 1995 affirmative action amendment to the Civil Service Law, and in 2000 a change in the Military Service Law stipulating, albeit with some qualifications, access to equal tasks for both men and women in the army. An amendment this year to the original Women's Rights Law contains a broad declaration of a woman's equal rights in all areas of work and social welfare and over her body "except as prohibited by law" (e.g. abortion).

But according to sociology professor Dafna Izraeli, resources are not allocated for enforcement, so there is very little implementation of legislative mandates. "Anything can pass as long as it doesn't cost money," says Izraeli. Furthermore, the grassroots agencies charged with translating the law into reality may be reluctant to act when their own norms lag behind the legal prescriptives. Yet, continues Izraeli, at least the laws have empowered women to be more assertive in making their claims; a supportive atmosphere in the Labor and Supreme courts makes their probability of success greater.

Sex trade—harassment at its most extreme.

In a landmark 1999 decision the Supreme Court blocked promotion of a general accused of having sexual relations with a 19-year-old recruit while he was commander of her base. This spring alone complaints by several court clerks against a judge in Tiberias caused him to take a leave of absence. Police considered charges against the Israeli manager of Continental Airlines for harassment. When a regional head of the country's largest health fund was arrested for investigation into harassment, the case took a tragic turn; the man committed suicide in police custody.

The harassment law subjects employers, including the army and civil service, to penalties as well, mandating maintaining an environment discouraging this behavior, posting the law and appointing an individual as the address for complaints.

But the lower down on the socio-economic scale one goes, the less likely that legal remedies will be pursued. There are ethnic differences as well. Arab or ultra-Orthodox women know that making an accusation may cause repercussions within their own insular communities. Jerusalem criminologist Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian asserts that complaining Arab women put their lives on the line. An Orthodox woman who complains may lessen her own children's prospects for marriage.

Even worse off are new immigrants, particularly from the former Soviet Union, so desperate for work that they are likely to cling to their jobs no matter how much harassment they face. Bar Ilan University sociologist Larissa Remennick dismisses the laws as irrelevant to them. Lower still are the thousands of foreign workers whose continued stay in the country is at the absolute discretion of their employers. And at the very bottom are the foreign workers without valid permits who have no rights under the legal system except the right to be deported at their own expense.

This latter group bears the brunt of another social ill recently blown open in Israel: trafficking in women. An unknown

Ladies' Day at the Israeli Consulate

In a post-feminist tableau at the Israeli Consulate, the press and invited guests were treated to unwitting self-parody by the males and some less-than-sisterly stabs from the General's daughter at the Israel Consulate in New York in June. The Consulate was showing off the distinguished group of women who had been chosen to represent Israel at the UN Beijing+5 Conference, which was called to assess what progress the nations of the world have made since the Beijing Women's Conference five years ago. Not much, if we judge by the opening comments of Israel Consult General Shmuel Sisso.

Sisso welcomed the room full of women with the observation that "we *usually* gather in this room to talk about *big* issues—the economy, the peace process."

Yael Dayan, Chairperson of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, chaired the meeting in her articulate Hebrew-accented English. She defined herself as "a radical feminist. But I have to go slowly, compromise." Wearing a red sweater with the Israel Women's Network pin that integrates a dove with the women's symbol, Dayan sparred with the Israeli women who, in theory, are her partners-in-arms. She was unimpressed when her colleague, delegate Zivia Cohen, Chairperson of the Council of Women's Organizations in Israel, excitedly shared with the group her personal breakthrough from the UN meeting: "Um Jihad, the Palestinian [National Authority] Minister of Social Affairs, gave me her number at work and at home." Dayan's so-what response: "Jihad lives an hour from Tel Aviv." Gen. Moshe Dayan's daughter takes no prisoners. You'd want her on your side.

Dayan spoke about her latest battle against trafficking in women. The penalties and even the language of the law, which recently passed, are based on drug legislation: prison terms years for "buying and selling, not just employing" women in sex trades.

An interesting tension arose between the Israelis and the American women asking questions about women's religious rights in Israel. These struggles, including legislative and judicial fights to allow women to pray out loud at the Western Wall, preoccupied many of the American women in the audience. To Dayan, however, they seemed only a passing nuisance. She said, "I'm not religious person but I'll fight for your right to pray the way you want....People on my side of the political map believe in the eventual separation of state and region and that religion will survive the separation."

At the end, Dayan archly introduced Ambassador Ronald Lauder, wondering if he was there to "give us a blessing." Lauder told the assemblage, "It's always good to see a lot of women....I'm in the cosmetics business." —*Amy Stone*

Two booklets mark Israel's significant progress on women's issues: "National Report on the Status of Women in Israel, Beijing 5+," from the Prime Minister's Office's Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women; and a reprint of the report presented by the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women to the special session of the UN General Assembly on Women 2000–Beijing+5; www.knesset.gov.il; dgordon@knesset.gov.il.

A Bison Original

HIDE

A Child's View of the Holocaust
By Naomi Samson
Foreword by Kenneth Jacobson
Preface by Joseph Samson

"(Samson's) story gives important insight into the nature of Polish collaboration with the Nazis. . . . recommended for public and academic libraries."
—Library Journal
$15 paper

A Bison Original

FROM A WORLD APART

A Little Girl in the Concentration Camps
By Francine Christophe
Translated by Christine Burls
Introduction by Nathan Bracher

"A profile in courage; pieces of memory reflect trauma and hope."
—Booklist
$15 paper

also available

OUTWITTING THE GESTAPO

By Lucie Aubrac
Translated by Konrad Bieber and Betsy Wing
Introduction by Margaret Collins Weitz
$12 paper

RUE ORDENER, RUE LABAT

By Sarah Kofman
Translated by Ann Smock
$10 paper / $30 cloth

publishers of Bison Books
800-755-1105 www.nebraskapress.unl.edu

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS

number of women—perhaps hundreds, perhaps thousands—are lured into the country annually with promise of employment only to find themselves forced into prostitution.

When the Israel Women's Network published its comprehensive report on trafficking in women in 1997, its allegations made few waves except on women's web sites and listserves. Only when Amnesty International reiterated the findings this May did the authorities in Israel snap to attention.

Amnesty charges that hundreds of young women are bought and sold for large sums of money by organized crime, that they are held in conditions of debt bondage, locked in apartments, brothels or massage parlors. In addition to being forced to work as prostitutes, many are beaten or raped by their captors. Their passports are often confiscated. Since they are illegal aliens, their only remedy is to be deported back to their home countries, where they and their families risk retaliation by the criminal elements which procured them. Israel, however, lacks any asylum procedure, and indeed the victims themselves are "effectively treated as criminals." When police raid the brothels, the women are "detained" in prison for long periods while waiting for deportation. Sometimes their incarceration is prolonged to force them to testify in criminal cases—testimony that can boomerang into further violence against them. But the women are given no choice. Amnesty holds the Israeli government responsible as having "failed to take adequate measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish human rights abuses committed against trafficked women."

This spring there was a conference on trafficking in Tel Aviv sponsored by the U.S. Embassy. A Jerusalem protest rally in June was shown on national TV and the press printed pictures of a demonstrator who lay symbolically bound and blindfolded upon the sidewalk. Suddenly a spate of newspaper articles covered escaped sex slaves whose complaints have resulted in arrest of their captors. In the past three years only 136 such files had gone to trial.

Whereas pimping and solicitation are crimes in Israel, prostitution per se is not illegal. Neither was trafficking in human beings or slavery. But since the Amnesty report, a bill that had been lingering in Knesset committee for years was revived. In July it passed the Knesset to become part of the penal code, imposing a penalty of up to 16 years imprisonment for anyone who traffics in women. Knesset member Yael Dayan also initiated provisions, which passed, that stipulate a 10-year sentence for forcing any individual to leave her country for the purposes of prostitution, and that stiffen penalties for those convicted of exploiting juveniles under 14.

Esther Sivan, Legal Advisor of the Israel Women's Network, calls the law a very significant victory, but cautions that only time will tell if the statute will change the police's heretofore laissez-faire attitude and step up prosecutions.

Trafficking in women is sexual harassment in its most extreme form. But if this is the worst of times, the signal is that better may be coming. The headlines, the courts and the actions of the Knesset imply an awakening to the injustices rampant against women, and signal mainstream interest in forcing change. ■

Helen Schary Motro, an American writer and attorney living in Israel and New York, is a columnist for the Jerusalem Post and fiction editor of WIN Internet magazine.

This poem was originally read at a Congregation Beth Israel dinner in Milwaukee. It parodies "A Woman of Valor, Who Can Find," a Proverb that husbands traditionally read on Shabbat to honor their wives. At the synagogue event, comments creator Susan Ellman, "The women thought it was great, and the men complained that it wasn't funny."

A Husband of Valor

BY SUSAN ELLMAN

A husband of valor who can find him?

Because his price is greater than sapphires.

He Causeth his wife to safely trust in him,

He Doeth her good and not evil.

Every unclean thing doth he gather and make clean again.

Into whites and colors he sorteth it;

He causeth not the good damask tablecloth to become pink,

Nor doth he cause woolen sweaters to shrink.

He Forgetteth not to add the Fabric softener.

He bringeth food from the Grocery store,

And he chooseth the best produce and Granola bars.

He worketh willingly with his Hands.

He Ironeth and foldeth all things and he putteth them away in their proper drawers; he matcheth socks also.

He cluttereth not the house with Junk.

Kitchens and bathrooms he scrubbeth and causeth them to shine.

He riseth also while it is yet night and maketh Lunches for all the children.

He remembereth who Loveth a sandwich of cheese

And who of peanut butter.

He is not afraid of the snow for his household;

He raketh the leaves and Moweth the grass also.

His lamp goeth not out by Night.

He considereth a back to school Outfit, and he buyeth it,

And lo, the button that falleth Off doth he sew On again.

He forgetteth not field trip Permission slips.

He breatheth Quietly by night.

He Remembereth to take out the garbage and he changeth the litter box and he walketh the dog.

Diapers also he changeth and washeth without complaint.

To Scouts and Soccer and gymnastics and saxophone lessons he Shleppeth all.

The Toilet seat he restoreth to its correct horizontal position;

And yea, he replaceth the roll when it doth become empty.

All things that are lost Underneath the sofa and Underneath the beds doth he find and restore to their places.

He Vacuumeth and he dusteth and he leaveth not his dirty socks and towels upon the floor.

He doeth Windows.

He drinketh not the six-pack of idleness.

Yesterday's newspapers doth he stack neatly and recycle.

He doth weed the garden and unloadeth he all the Zucchini before it rotteth.

His wife is known in the gates,

When she sitteth among the elders of the land.

He openeth his mouth with wisdom;

And kindness is ever on his tongue.

He looketh well to the ways of his household,

His children rise up and call him blessed;

His wife also, and she patteth him upon his head.

"Many sons have done valiantly,

But thou excellest them all."

Susan Ellman teaches at Washington High School in Milwaukee. She has three daughters and two cats, and says she used to have a cat named Lilith.

A Natural Hist

BY JUDYTH HAR EVEN

—IMAGINE A PROPELLER. Imagine it implanted in your chest, held in place by a nail shot through your sternum. Memories make it turn—memories of family gatherings, washing dishes at the kitchen sink while kids watch The Simpsons, reading *Where the Wild Things Are* while husband watches the news. Memories of a home. Each time a memory surfaces—(that can happen anywhere, with no warning, even here, under the moon, as we talk)—the hub begins to revolve slowly, so slowly you can still count the twelve blades of the propeller. But as you dive into the scene, recalling the smell of the detergent, the colors of the quilt, the words of the lullabies, the hub gains speed. The blades turn and swirl. So fast you can't count them. All you could see, if you were to peel away my skin, soft as a five year old's, would be a circling whiz. Then, as each blade passes from below this point right here, the meeting point of the clavicles, down, towards the left, like this, it clips off a slice of my heart. If you can imagine this, then you will understand the pain I feel today, a year after I left my husband and children.... Blood splatters on the blades, eventually covering the entire propeller. So rather than a pulsing red thing that ticks in its cavity like a metronome, giving rhythm to life, I have a bloody propeller.

—The rhythm of life is gone.

—Gone forever.

—Forever?

—So it seems.

—But you look so good. You've never looked better.

—On the outside, I look good. I grew my hair long and wear it in a pony tail. But rather than looking like the sophisticated fifty-four year old I imagined, I look more like the seventh grader who chopped off her bangs. I've made peace with mousy blonde. L'Oreal Ash Blond shows only on the ends. I stopped dyeing, pretending. Can you see my twenty-four strands of gray in the moonlight? I earned each one when I was deciding what to do. If he doesn't leave, will I? Can we work it out? Can I make him leave? Can I make him love? Can my kids survive separation? Can I exist without my family? Is loneliness in marriage preferable to loneliness living alone?

—Each dilemma, a gray hair.

—And each decision, a wrinkle.

—You're beautiful.

—That's because I ignore my lips. They rest naturally over the cavern of my mouth.

—What?

—This may sound silly, but such a restful pose is something that has eluded me for almost fifty years, ever since my mother told me when I was five that my lips were too big, that I should hold them in, pressed, closed like a...like a new moon. At ten she told me to take trumpet lessons. That will flatten your wide lips, she said. Wide lips were not fashionable in 1955 and my mother, whom I love, was. I imagined my lips brought shame to the family.

—Did you take trumpet lessons?

—No.

—Thank God.

—Instead, I learned piano. I sang romantic songs from "South Pacific" in a room where nobody watched. Now I'm letting my fat lips rest the way they please...the way a nose hangs on a face...the way a penis lies between a man's legs.

—I can't imagine a mother criticizing a child for the way an organ relaxes.

—Why not? Mothers are people. They hurt their children, but don't mean to. Today I let my full lips rest in their natural state, slightly puckered.

—What do you do at home, when you're not here, visiting the kibbutz?

—I spend a good deal of time relaxing my mouth. For decades, I smiled. Now I no longer care if every kid in junior high doesn't know my name and give me a hearty Hi! between classes. I can live without their Hi's. I don't care if I'm not elected Most Friendly Girl in ninth grade or School President in twelfth. And besides, the bloody propeller depletes my strength, so the facial muscles don't have energy to push the lips to a smile. Those muscles worked overtime when I was sixteen and seventeen, smiling at my mother's friends.

—So you never go out? No dates? No men?

—I found a gym. I have been going religiously since one day in March when the family doctor told me the weight lifting machines could stop the escape of calcium from my high-risk bones. Fifteen minutes, three times a week will stop the breakdown, she said. I'm lucky if I get out of there in an hour and fifteen minutes....Did I mention that once the heart is torn to shreds, blood splattered on the blades like so many Kandinskys, that the heart, somehow, miraculously, regenerates? Only to start the process again...

—Here. You can use this.

RY OF DIVORCE

—Thanks. I guess I shouldn't go out without tissues....I wanted my marriage to work. I pursued happiness—a family—the two plus three—a nice home, the trips, Friday night dinners (even if I ran out crying), the bar mitzvah parties, Purim costumes, graduations, first girl friends, extended family Seders. I was addicted to wanting that life to succeed so I dragged my husband to five couple therapists over a ten-year period, hoping one of them might have the secret, the magic, the technique, the solution, the word, or the sponge that could erase my loneliness. I thought—no, I believed that one day, one day, it will be all right. I believed in the Theory of One Day.

LAURIE DOUGLAS

—It's very Israeli, you know. *Yehiyeh beseder.* Always future tense. Sounds like you've thought about this a lot.

—I had the perfect medium—silence. Twenty-six years of silence.

—You mean you never talked?

—Talked?

—Yes, like we're doing. Words pass through your mouth into my air space. I listen. Ponder. Then I give you some back.

—Words didn't work that way for him. See that barbed wire fence over there, at the foot of Gilboa?

—Yes.

—That's what words were like for him. He used them to keep me out. I got tangled in barbed wire words.

—How did you figure that out?

—After each talk, I felt no closer to him than before. Talking was an intellectual exercise to maintain distance. It was like being in a fourth grade spelling bee. He was the judge and I was the little girl. He edited my sentence structure, criticized my choice of words. My vocal chords annoyed him. I always lost. At the end of a "talk," he'd say, Think about that for a while. After twenty-six years, I didn't want to think. I wanted to kill. That's when I realized words function differently for him.

—How do they work for you?

—Like scalpels and bricks. First, I peel myself open with them. Then, once I am bare, I build rooms around myself.

—Until when did you believe in the Theory of One Day?

—Until someone said, Maybe your husband is unable to give you what you need. Those were the words. Maybe your husband is unable to give you what you need. That sentence set the first blade in place. On that day I let go of the Theory of One Day long enough to realize I was asking for something that he could not give me. Everyone else saw it. They saw it years ago when he insulted me in public. But I couldn't see it, because I was locked into *Yehiyeh beseder.*

—Sounds too familiar.

—I knew then it would never be all right. That's when I started checking my options.

—How did you find the courage to leave him and the kids?

—It's not courage one needs. It's imagination.

—What do you mean?

—I could only do it after I imagined myself living alone in a different space, in a specific apartment by myself.

—Do you still love him?

—Do I love my mother?

—You're beautiful.

—For the past thirteen months nobody has told me I'm crazy, dumb, stupid, abnormal, worthless and selfish. These were the hardballs.

—What were the softballs?

—He threw my wet towels on my desk. He shoved my potholders into a corner of the windowsill. Foolish things, now, when I say them, but then they seemed portentous.

—Sounds like he wanted to throw you out.

—Yes. That's what I thought.

—I hardly recognized you when you walked into the dining room tonight. Do you want to try again?

—Yes.

—Do you think it will be different next time?

—Yes.

—Why?

—Because I can imagine intimacy. Before I didn't know what it looked like. I only knew something was missing. But now, with you, this, I have a hint, so I can imagine.

—That's good. If you can imagine, it is no dream. Tell me. Why did you marry him?

—Imagination.

—What do you mean?

—I imagined we were dancing the hora on a moonlit night on Kibbutz Jezreel in 1944.

—But Jezreel didn't exist in '44.

—Neither did I. That's why I say imagination. You need to know when it's your enemy and when it's your friend.

Judyth Har Even is a writer living in Israel.

My First Aliyah

Wherein a grown woman surprises herself by crying her eyes out on the bimah of the Berkeley Aquarian Minyan.

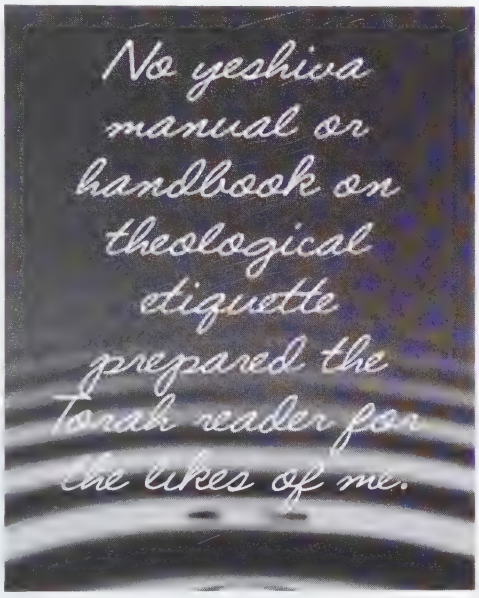
by Marianne Langner Zeitlin

When my daughter offered me a packet of tissues as I was called for an *aliyah*, I scoffed at her. "Don't worry," I whispered, rising from my cramped synagogue seat and straightening my skirt as I prepared for the honor of reciting the blessings before and after the Torah reading. "I never cry when I have mascara on. I'm perfectly okay."

Some okay. By the time I reached the pulpit to take my place next to my son's fiancee, Karen, who had the previous *aliyah*, my knees were wobbling and my throat was engorged. By the time the *ba'al kriyah*—the Torah reader—indicated it was my turn, I kissed the Torah with the fringe of my prayer shawl, and I knew that hubris had done me in.

Nor am I talking about some ladylike welling of the eyes with maybe a lone tear. I'm talking *deluge*. Floodgates opening and buckets pouring forth and me shivering uncontrollably—without a tissue in sight.

"What are the names of your parents," the Torah reader asked, trying not to look too askance, but for all I was able to answer, he might as well have asked me to cite the theory of relativity. "Mordecai and Chana," came the answer from my son, who was sitting in the front row beneath me, and the Torah reader announced that "Sarah, bat Mordecai and Chana," would now do the honors.



For Sarah, bat Mordecai and Chana, honors indeed. "B-blessed be the Lord, the b-blessed," I tried to sing but nothing came out. "B-blessed be the b-blessed until eternity," the words stuck in my throat, new gusts interrupting each aspiration, "who ch-chose us from among all the n-nations, and gave us His T-torah, b-blessed be Y-you our L-lord, who g-gave us the T-torah."

By the end, forget the melody, forget audibility even. Verbal, that is. My finest hour this was not.

A blend of outrage and disbelief suffused the *ba'al kriyah's* face as he gazed at me through the heavy lens of his wire-rimmed glasses. No yeshiva manual or handbook on theological etiquette had prepared this gentleman of the old *shul* for the likes of me. Bad enough to have a woman in that formerly exclusive male preserve—but a woman in hysterics with, no doubt, trails of mascara running down her face? This is what you get when you tamper with taboos, his body language all but shrieked—insult, injury and incoherence.

After an SOS roll of the eyes, he continued chanting the Torah passage slowly, extending each cantillation, stretching each phrase, his clenched fists awash in the primary colors radiating from the stained glass windows.

The passage was from *"Va'et'hanan,"* which is a plea to the Almighty to be gracious. Amen to that, I agreed sobbingly, and especially to me. The *ba'al kriyah* slowed down even further, presumably to enable me to pull myself together for the reiteration of my prayer at the end.

Taking my cue, I tried to do just that: I straightened my shoulders, stiffened my upper lip, then bit it hard. But go turn off Niagara Falls. The pent-up tears were unstoppable.

So were those of many in the congregation for, as I was to learn later, there wasn't a dry eye in the hall.

And why? What was it all for? How did I manage to bring on this unscheduled *Yizkor* service—the prayer for the dead? Why was this lady crying on the *bimah* of the Berkeley Aquarian Minyan in a way that must have seemed like nothing short of blasphemy when, in point of fact, she should be rejoicing at her good fortune? Enough with the *Yizkor* thing already, dear lady. What is so terrible?

Don't ask, as my foremothers would have said.

Not that anybody was asking or that they really needed to know the answers. Just the sight of somebody with more than a half century of time on this planet bawling her eyes out and you know she has her reasons.

But, hey, if you want to get technical, or, as Bialik put it in his poem about the Kishinev pogrom, "If you have the desire to know further," or as the Haggadah asks, "How many are the goodly favors for which we are indebted," consider:

Just to have lived to see the day her firstborn—he of the wheat fields-of-Kansas mop of hair whom she despaired of ever seeing again when he hitchhiked cross-country at sixteen—was to be married—would have been sufficient.

Just to have seen the behind-the-iron-curtain-*mehitza* seats to which women were relegated (which she, the daughter of an Orthodox rabbi, had always decried) come crashing down—would have been sufficient.

Just to have her father's cantorial splendors (his was what the Jews call a *zise moel*—a sweet mouth) ringing in her ears as she tried to repeat the ancient litany—would have been sufficient.

Just to remember (because the day, *davka*, happens to coincide with the anniversary of her mother's death) the stab to her vitals, upon returning home after an extended *shiva*, to find that the chrysanthemums had the chutzpah to continue to grow as though nothing had happened—would have been sufficient.

Just to hear her new Gentile *mehutanim*—in-laws—(who had been sitting next to her) supplanted by the *ba'al kriyah* when he referred to the parents of their converted daughter as Abraham and Sarah—would have been sufficient.

Just to recall that it was strictures like these which had made her rebel against Orthodoxy in the first place—would have been sufficient.

Just to be brought back to the fold by, of all people, her counterculture son, after his own previous forays into Quakerism, Grateful Deadism, and, go figure, Buddhism via the Divine Light Mission—would have been sufficient.

Just because that selfsame son, who made a conscious decision to infuse his life with holiness, has thereby picked up where his grandmother's Holocaust-destroyed family left off—would have been sufficient.

Just because she suddenly realizes how the years have piled up like credit card charges at holiday time—would have been sufficient.

Just because—

She could go on and on. No matter. Any one of these *dayenus* would have done it; together they had the makings of a cardiac arrest. And what is it with that *she* all of a sudden? *I* am that she, she is that me, enough with literary obfuscation. Life, ah sweet mystery of same, with its sunsets and sunrises, with its mountains and seashores, with its matzoh balls and Chocolate Decadence Cake—that same life can also be a font of unrestrainable tears at the most unsuitable moment.

I stiffened my upper lip, then bit it hard. But go turn off Niagara Falls. The pent-up tears were unstoppable.

But who has time for philosophizing when all I can think of is a tissue, a tissue, my worldly goods for a tissue. Surreptitiously, or so I hoped, I wiped my face with the back of my hands. The *ba'al kriyah* eyed me as though I'd set Judaism back a couple of centuries and pulled his prayer shawl tighter around him. "You that cleave to God, you are all alive today," he intoned, still stretching out each word, giving them full value.

"You are all alive today...." The words resonated in my ears. Were they alive today, my mama and papa, they of more than blessed memory? If so, what did they make of this spectacle, the outraged *ba'al lriyah*, the Gentile *mehutanim*, the converted bride, the prodigal groom, not to mention their crybaby daughter at the, gasp, egalitarian pulpit?

Would they have laughed, would they have cried, or would they have shaken their heads in disbelief? But above all, would they have accepted it? Papa, yes; but mama? I think not. Life had made Mama compromise in many ways during her nearly fourscore years but religion was not one of them. "I'm too old to change," she used to say, as she unwrapped her *glattest* of *glatt* kosher food on visits, "and I wouldn't want to if I could."

Although the *ba'al kriyah* continued to stall in hopes of seeing some let-up, there was none. And try as I might, rubbing my eyes, trying for yogic breaths, playing my I'm-not-really-here game, nothing helped. The bitter herbs continued.

Suddenly, my almost-daughter-in-law, ashen-faced Karen, who had been standing by helplessly, covered my hands with hers and slowly guided them to the handles of the Torah for support.

Her hands were warm and steady, mine were wet and trembling. For the first time in my life, wonder of wonders, I was actually touching a Torah. My heart hammered painfully against my ribs as I circled my palms around the burnished wood.

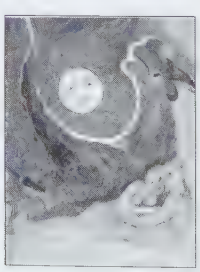
Always the two Torahs rested high in their Ark in my father's synagogue, bedecked in velvets, encrusted with jewels, crowned with silver, to be taken out by priestly Levi'im and Cohanim, to be worshiped only from afar by mere female mortals. The Torah, the Book, as in People of the; the Torah, which until the re-establishment of the State of Israel was called the portable Jewish homeland; the Torah, which, when too bedraggled for further use, is buried in a formal funeral in holy ground.

Before me in a blur was the exquisite calligraphy, the broadened *beths* and *kafs* to make uniform margins, the careful hand-printed letters with their distinctive squiggles. I grasped the handles of the Torah tighter and shut my eyes. When I opened them I saw the concerned face of Karen. "Thank you, Ruth," I whispered to her, and I knew by her smile of comprehension that the biblical reference was not lost on her.

Somehow it worked, braced by that mystical link with my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents going back to the *Ba'al Shem Tov,* I sing-songed the second half of the prayer as I had heard my father do hundreds of times, even remembering to add the feminine pronoun of "You" and its concomitant verb changes for this gender-sensitive congregation, and culminating in Papa's distinctive signature cadence when he came to "blessed be You our Lord/Lady, Who gave us the To-o-o-rah."

Rising above the chorus of amens that greeted my finish was the proud voice of my son, because of whose *Auf-ruf* (Yiddish for the traditional custom for grooms being called up to the Torah on the Sabbath before their wedding) I had been honored with my first *Aliyah.* ■

Marianne Langner Zeitlin is a novelist who lives in Rochester, New York.



Lilith

Lilith gift cards

Enjoy our beautiful covers again with these new notecards, featuring some of our extraordinary artists: Miriam Schapiro, Joni Levy Liberman, Lynne Feldman and Betty La Duke. Order sets for yourself and as gifts and support Lilith at the same time. 12 full-color blank notecards: $15.00

To order, call **1-888-2-LILITH**
or email **lilithmag@aol.com**
250 W. 57th St., Suite 2432
New York, NY 10107

still life with poodles

a short story about the single life by celeste mostoff

It's midnight, and we think the party is over. My father loosens his tie, unbuttons his collar and leans back into the den couch. "That was lovely," he says to me. "Are you happy with it?"

My mother blinks and smiles at me. She has put on her best, dinner for fifty—family, old friends, new acquaintances. Everyone gathered in her Fifth Avenue apartment to wish me Happy Birthday.

I smile back at my parents. "I'm as happy as I could possibly be, considering that I've just turned thirty-five and have neither husband nor children nor a career."

"Oh, honey!" My mother's face turns hurt and dewy. As if she has any idea how it feels to wind up with her and my father at the end of the evening. To look forward to Hanukah with them and Christmas with them and New Year's Eve with no one.

Anyway—surprise!—the party isn't over. Maximilian Auerbach emerges from my mother's bathroom. He must have spent the past fifteen minutes in there, while we returned coats and said good-bye to the last elevator-load of guests.

I don't know Max well. I met him at a Smith-Barney presentation about corporate social responsibility. We have some friends in common. I invited him to my party because he is a moderately attractive, wealthy, single man, and I am desperate to find the love of my life. Not that I'm super-impressed with Max Auerbach, but let's just say that by now I've learned not to leave stones unturned.

My mother tips the caterers, and I expect Max to say, 'I'd better be heading out' and ask for his coat. Instead, he sprawls on the couch next to my father and grins. His maroon sports jacket, strawberry blonde hair, ruddy complexion and bloodshot eyes combine to create an impression of great energy, belied by his present posture. I usually think of my father as an imposing figure, particularly from the perspective of a potential suitor, but Max slaps him on the knee and says, "George, we were speaking of dogs. Well, if you're allergic, a poodle is the only way to go."

"I don't like poodles," my father grumbles, "little snappy, yappy things."

"Not small poodles. No, of course not. Big ones. A standard poodle. Did you know that the poodle is the most intelligent breed?"

I can just hear my father saying 'who needs an intelligent dog?', but because he is even more desperate than my mother and me put together for me to be suitably married—whatever that means to each of us—he nods, considering. My mother feigns interest, too, though she is obviously exhausted from hostessing and has been dead-set against this dog thing for years. I have slipped off my shoes and curled my legs under me in the leather armchair, trying to look charming or at least as if I am awake. I'm so tired I've decided I'll sleep over in my childhood bedroom, now redecorated in chintz for the occasional house guest. Max continues to praise poodles.

I think about my last four blind dates and how futile each one has been. I doubt that passion and fulfillment are coming my way from some nice Jewish boy who belongs to my Aunt Edythe's country club or works for our stockbroker's firm, yet I don't know where else to look. Lonely as I am, I'm not sure my problems are even about a guy. Secretly, I've been collecting course catalogs from far away schools, eco-travel brochures and New Age workshop schedules. I fantasize about some program, somewhere, where in exchange for tuition,

hard work and cheerful participation, I will be granted a life. I read the Sunday Times education section, wishing that, as the advertisements promise, a night school MBA would open up *my* world. I peruse the job classifieds and imagine working as an administrative assistant in a busy downtown office. It may sound absurd, but sometimes I envy people who don't have trust funds.

In the meantime, Max has a great idea. He jumps to his feet and waves his big red hands as he speaks. His two standard poodles are downstairs in his car. He'll bring them up so my father can meet them. We'll all get to meet them. Isaac and Sybil.

"Like Isaac and Sybil Freiburg," my mother says.

"You know who they are?" Max asks.

My mother has just finished reading the book about the Freiburgs, bankers and jewelers in Germany and Holland, and one of the oldest Jewish families in New York.

"Well, my middle name is Freiburg," Max tells us, beaming and combing his hair back with his fingers. "Isaac and Sybil were my great-grandparents." He rushes out to fetch their canine namesakes.

My mother perks up like she's just received a shot of B-12. "He's descended from the Freiburgs?"

My father glows. "He seems to like you a lot."

I roll my eyes. Sometimes, the less I say, the better I get along with my parents.

Recently, I made the mistake of showing my mother an article I'd clipped from a human rights magazine. It contrasted an orphanage in Alabama overcrowded with black babies to a New York adoption agency with a three-year waiting list for white newborns. "You want me to have kids," I said. "How about a black one?"

My mother hardly thought that would be fair, and I asked, to whom? To you, she insisted, it would be so difficult and eventually disappointing, *and* to the child who needs its own community.

"A slum in Montgomery? Fine, I'll adopt two—they'll have each other."

"Great, darling, your own gang."

Tonight I remind myself not to mention that the most attractive man at the party was a Puerto Rican catering assistant.

Suddenly, Max is back, and there are dogs in the den, curly poodles the colors of red and white wine. They sniff, they lick, they turn, they wag, with the same extroverted personalities as their master. My mother pats them with one hand, and with the other she deftly whisks a crystal candy dish from the coffee table. I can see from the set of her jaw that she is breathing through her mouth to avoid their smell, which is considerable. In fact, they stink, but no one mentions it. We take turns caressing their heads. My father grabs his camera from a desk drawer, and we take pictures. The poodles pose with my parents, then with Max and me together. My father clicks away, dreaming of grandchildren named Auerbach. I think I feel fleas burrowing into my velvet skirt.

There is a lull in the conversation, and I hope that Max will find it a good time to leave. But my mother is treacherous and asks him if he would like some tea or perhaps a glass of juice.

Max has tea *and* juice, a few slices of leftover filet and some chocolate-covered strawberries. He licks the chocolate off his fingers, wipes them on his corduroys, then tousles one of the dogs between its ears. He tells us all about his country house in the Hamptons and how adorable the poodles are, bounding playfully in the tall grass. They were just there today. I remind myself to check for deer ticks before bed. If that moment ever comes.

Max disappears down the hall into my mother's bathroom for another ten minutes, and I imagine his progress. First, he might actually do the legitimate thing—unzip his pants and with rosy penis in hand take a loud piss into my mother's pink toilet. Then, nine chances out of ten, he leans over the marble vanity, careful not to displace the perfume bottles or enameled make-up dish, and cracks the window. I picture him sitting down on the Lucite vanity stool to roll a joint. He smokes it slowly, while his free hand opens the beveled mirrored medicine chest and he scans the labels of my mother's prescriptions.

i am stony, silent at first. "mom," i finally say, "i'd take the dogs before the man."

The poodles settle down on my shoes and my parents take advantage of Max's absence to yawn, stretch and rub their eyes. "He's enthusiastic," my mothers whispers, and I nod. My father cracks his knuckles. I don't think I've ever seen him this patient, certainly not at one-thirty in the morning, and I feel sorry for him.

Max returns, followed by a pungent smoky smell that my parents can't possibly think is cologne. He does most of the talking. "George, I heard you're on the board of the East Side Jewish Cultural Center. That's great. You know, my family put the JCC on the map." He wraps his arm around my father's shoulders, and my father forces a smile. Max elaborates upon his ancestors' accomplishments. At one point he says that his family put Israel on the map.

It is the dogs who finally bark, because they need to be walked. We send Max, Isaac and Sybil Freiburg Auerbach off with hugs, coats, leashes and a blue Tiffany bag full of steak and cookies.

Back in the den, my mother replaces the crystal dish and opens a window to let out the dog smell. "Well, George, I'm still not sold on dogs of our own, but perhaps we could have some grandpoodles." She winks at me.

I am stony, silent at first. "Mom," I finally say, "I'd take the dogs before the man."

"Why?" my parents ask in unison.

"For Christ's sake, he's pompous and obnoxious, ridiculous and practically delusional! And by the way, did you notice his eyes? He was smoking dope in your bathroom."

"Oh well," my mother says. "That's what the kids

did at your sweet sixteen. I was shooing them out of the bathrooms the whole night. You know. Boys will be boys."

"But Max is forty."

"Yes," she glares at me, "and *you're* thirty-five."

I think how five years from now, if nothing in my life changes, I'll be blowing out my forty candles in the same Chippendale-furnished dining room, surrounded by the same group of pitying cousins, encouraging friends, stray Jewish bachelors and desperate parents. An untimely death is starting to sound attractive, and my mind casts about for less dramatic options. I will take a boat around the world, buy a house in a small New England town, teach literacy to welfare mothers, join an ashram in India. In any case, I vow, this is my last year of suffering empty luxury.

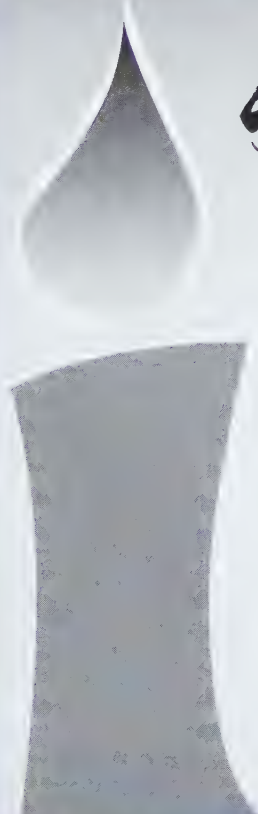
I do spend Hanukah with my parents and Christmas with my parents, and it's as depressing as I imagined. Then Max Auerbach calls and invites me to a series of parties for New Year's Eve. With no viable alternative, I graciously accept, and on December 29th, my mother takes me to the Gianni Versace boutique to purchase a slinky silk dress for the occasion. But on the afternoon of the 31st, when I should be catching a cab to the hair salon, I call Max's answering machine and cancel. I don't even tell my parents, who would be too worried on my behalf to enjoy their theater benefit, but I end up spending New Year's Eve in my bathrobe, alone in my apartment. I eat scrambled eggs for supper and leaf through my files of catalogs and clippings for hours. At midnight, I hear the muffled popping sound of fireworks in the distance and look out the window. A light snow has begun to fall, and I turn off my bedroom lamp to see the swirl of white flakes around the streetlight below. I press my nose against the cold glass, and as I watch a bus roll by, I finger the article about the orphans in Alabama.

lonely as i am, i'm not sure my problems are even about a guy.

Valerie Ann Leff is co-director of the Great Smokies Writing Program in Asheville, North Carolina. Her stories have appeared in The Sun, The Seattle Review and other journals.

JEWISH WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

Light a Fire–
Share a Vision



October Family Violence Awareness Campaign

Help shed light on this national epidemic by participating in Jewish Women International's **Light a Fire–Share a Vision** Family Violence Awareness Campaign during the month of October.

Join communities around the country as they organize candlelight vigils, panel discussions, prayer services, marches, and rallies. Every voice matters, every program makes a difference.

For more information, call our national office at **1-800-343-2823** or contact our website at **www.jewishwomen.org**.

Jewish Women INTERNATIONAL

1-800-343-2823 • www.jewishwomen.org 1828 L Street NW, Suite 250 • Washington, DC 20036

Life & Death, Orphanages & Escapes, Rescues & Friendship

The Stuff All Good Kids' Books Are Made Of

Julius Lester brings us a thrilling Hebrew heroine who midwifes the Jewish people. **Ellen Carson Levine** draws on fairy tale tradition and her Sephardi father's childhood in an orphanage. **Mirjam Pressler** offers a fictionalized diary of a tough young Jewish girl who was removed from her abusive Holocaust survivor mother. Anthropologist-turned-novelist **Joan Abelove** left Jewish footprints in her first novel, *Go and Come Back*, in which an anthropologist in her 20s observing jungle village life in Peru reveals that she comes from a culture where people are sad for seven days after a person dies and even tear their clothes. In her new young adult novel, the Jewish content is more overt: keeping kosher and whether a teen should date a non-Jew. **Irene Gut Opdyke** offers hope by example of her own brave deeds. Also, unusual picture books about circumcision… —*Naomi Danis*

Who Really Rescued Moses?

Pharoah's Daughter: A Novel of Ancient Egypt
by Julius Lester
Harcourt Brace, $17

What if the sister of Moses who hides in the bulrushes and watches at the Nile was not Miriam? For his retelling of the Moses story, Julius Lester discovered that Miriam is not actually mentioned by name until she leads the Israelite women in song and dance at the Red Sea. Who then, he wonders, is the sister who watches over Moses in the basket? Thus emerges Almah, older sister of Aaron, Miriam and Moses. It is through her sharp eyes and witty voice that Lester stunningly retells the Exodus saga in *Pharaoh's Daughter.*

Strong-willed and passionate twelve-year-old Almah is an enigma to her mother, Yocheved, a devout woman who believes change will come when Ya ordains it. Only Amram, Almah's father, is able to see that the girl's fascination with the world beyond the slave settlement of Goshen may be a gift rather than a danger; he teaches her Egyptian and encourages her to always use her eyes and her mind. When Almah encounters Meryetamun, the Pharaoh's favorite daughter, at the banks of the Nile, her life changes forever, subsequently changing the lives of all the Hebrews.

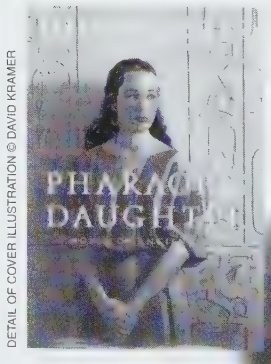
Almah accompanies Moses and Yocheved to the palace, acting as a translator. She grows close to Meryetamun and eventually to the Pharaoh, and thrives as she never had in Goshen. Her interactions with the other characters speak to the traditional story, the historical period, and the strengths and frailties of human nature. In particular, the relationship between Almah and Yocheved is both beautiful and painfully familiar, as we watch Almah struggle between finding the path she knows is hers and gaining the love and approval she longs for from her mother.

Few readers, regardless of age, will fail to recognize parts of themselves in Almah's alienation from her family and painful search for belonging, Meryetamun's confusion as she begins to feel more Hebrew than Egyptian, and Moses's anger and frustration as he, too, struggles to discover where he belongs.

Lester has written a book that is twice-magical: not only has he created a fabulous and fantastic retelling of a story that was pretty fabulous and fantastic to begin with, but he has made his characters leap into our lives not only as historical figures, but as contemporaries. Lester inspires the reader with the desire to find and fulfill one's own role in the Divine Plan.

Almah is a heroine worth knowing, and *Pharaoh's Daughter* is sure to inspire questions, discussion, and "fact-checking" trips to the Bible, as well as empathy, laughter, and an unsuppressible joy in life.

—*Arielle R. Derby*



DETAIL OF COVER ILLUSTRATION © DAVID KRAMER

In a Boys' Orphanage

Dave at Night
by Gail Carson Levine
HarperCollins, $15.95

Harry Potter of the Hogwarts School for Wizards (needing no introduction) and Stanley Yelnats, the palindromic anti-hero of the Green Lake Camp for bad boys in Louis Sachar' *Holes*, have found their match. David Caros is the newest boy-hero-being-initiated at the Hell Hole for Brats, otherwise known as the Hebrew Home for Boys.

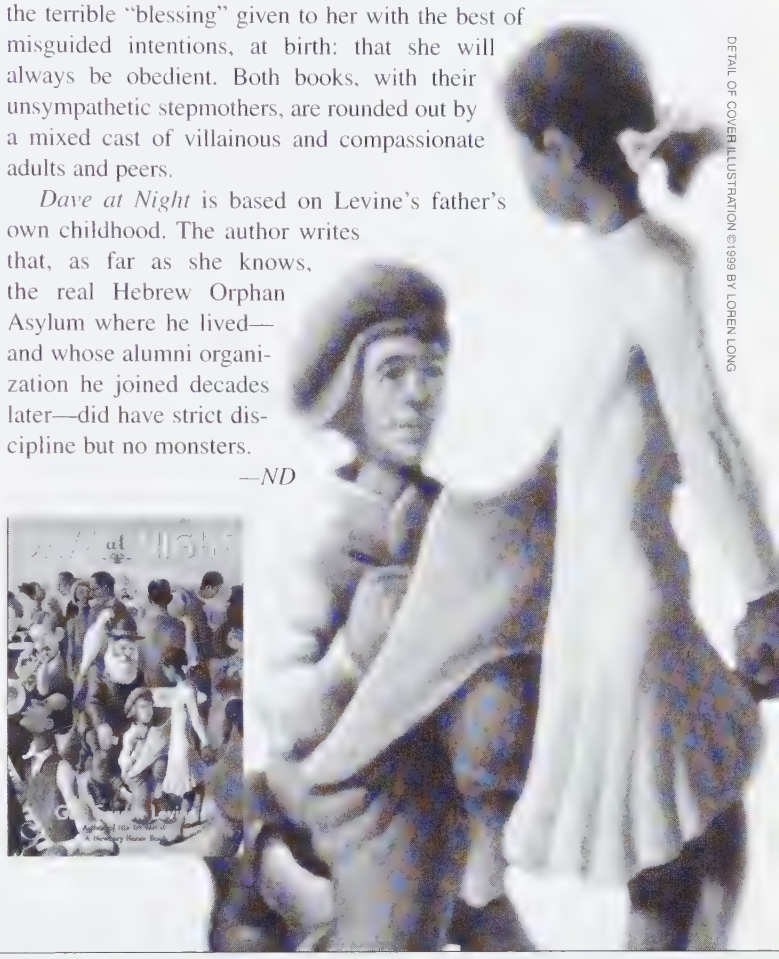
The mischievous and poignant adventures of a bereft boy, *Dave at Night*, set on the Lower East Side and in Harlem of the 1920s, is narrated by a spunky and self-described troublemaker. His mother died of complications following his birth. ("No I didn't do it on purpose, but probably I was fooling around in her belly, having a fine time, and I kicked or punched too hard, and one thing led to another and she died.") His father, a remarried Jewish immigrant from Salonika, Greece, a woodworker who had once made a special cabinet with secret drawers for the sultan of Turkey, falls off a roof and dies too, catapulting Dave into the orphanage.

Dave smartly takes in his surroundings, matter of factly deals with his grief, shares some mildly vengeful fantasies towards the stepmother, brother, uncles and aunts who fail to rescue him, and imagines what his father would think about all this. Dave makes daring nighttime escapes, meeting up with an elderly Yiddish fortune teller, a surrogate grandfather who schlepps him along to jazz soirees and rent parties, acquainting him with the upbeat sounds and sights of the Harlem Renaissance. There he finds the love of a sweet young African-American girl, an orphan adopted by her doting and powerful entrepreneurial aunt.

Levine is best known as the author of *Ella Enchanted*, the Newberry honor-winning feminist midrashic novel based on Cinderella. Its heroine struggles mightily to free herself from the terrible "blessing" given to her with the best of misguided intentions, at birth: that she will always be obedient. Both books, with their unsympathetic stepmothers, are rounded out by a mixed cast of villainous and compassionate adults and peers.

Dave at Night is based on Levine's father's own childhood. The author writes that, as far as she knows, the real Hebrew Orphan Asylum where he lived—and whose alumni organization he joined decades later—did have strict discipline but no monsters.

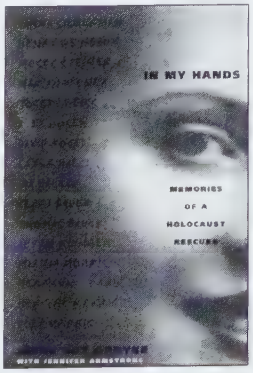
—ND



DETAIL OF COVER ILLUSTRATION ©1999 BY LOREN LONG

How You Become a Hero

In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer
Irene Gut Opdyke with Jennifer Armstrong
Knopf Books for Young Readers, $17



"I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, a defier of the SS and the Nazis all at once…" explained Irene Opdyke, a Polish Christian. "One's first steps are always small." To society's detriment, few people have "small" steps as large as Opdyke's.

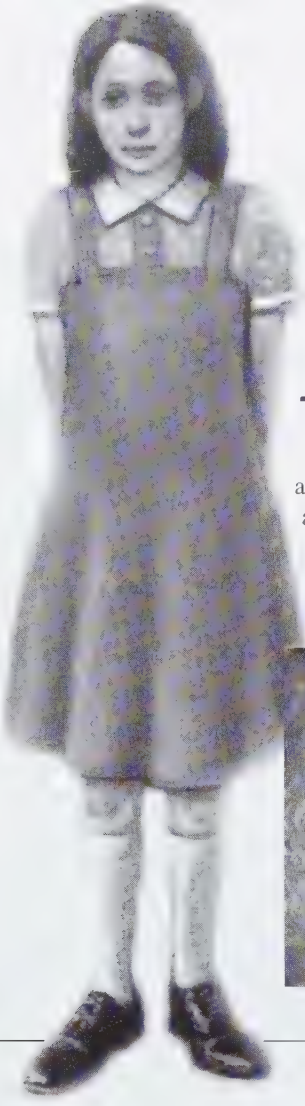
Opdyke risked her life many times over to save the lives of at least 12 Jews, and that figure doesn't include the Jews to whom she smuggled food and supplies or warned about Nazi invaders. Over the course of six years, Opdyke was a nurse for the Polish partisan army, a housekeeper for German officers and a spy for the Polish liberation effort.

Opdyke didn't just help people out of a sense of obligation. She truly loved "her" refugees, and this showed in the great lengths she went to in order to spare their lives. When Opdyke's boss, a major in the German army, found out about her actions, he kept her secret on the grounds that she become his mistress. She did, but did not tell her Jewish friends what she went through for them, to spare them guilt.

The only low point of the book is Opdyke's defense of the Polish people. Although there were anti-Nazi Poles, she directly downplays Polish anti-Semitism. As much as Opdyke and her cohorts were exceptional in rescuing Jews, they stand out even more in the context of most Poles' behavior towards Jews.

Young adults are exposed to the Holocaust with images of death, images of despair, and of a need to rebuild. A positive message—of a woman doing all she can to save lives—is rare, so this book is a must-read for people of all ages.

—Susannah Jaffe



DETAIL OF COVER ILLUSTRATION © 1998 BY DANIEL FIEDLER

A Diary Like No Other

Halinka
by Mirjam Pressler
translated from the German by
Elizabeth D. Crawford
Henry Holt, $16.95

Twelve-year old Halinka, taken from her Holocaust-survivor mother after being neglected and abused, lives in a German home for abandoned children after World War II. She does not trust anyone at the home, has trouble making friends, and is convinced that her life will be perfect if only she can go and live with her Aunt Lou. Halinka treasures Aunt Lou's letters and lives for her weekend trips to Aunt Lou's apartment, but the state will not allow Lou custody until she finds a husband.

Halinka deals with her sadness and frustration by sneaking into the home's storeroom nightly to write in her secret "thoughts book," in which she records the life lessons she has learned. Each chapter of the book *Halinka* is named for one of the girl's "thoughts." For example, "Even in the Garden of Eden it wouldn't be good to be alone," and "He who dreams of palaces loses his place in the hut."

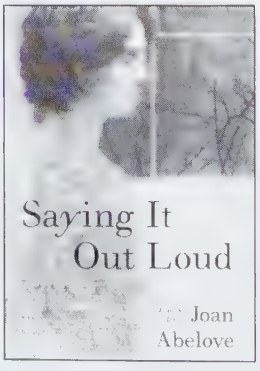
Despite the lofty chapter names, the book does not moralize, nor does it oversimplify Halinka's life by organizing it into neat little episodes; rather, the chapter titles provide a sense of continuity for Halinka's turbulent experiences in the home. Halinka sounds, authentically, like any twelve-year old struggling to understand the complicated world around her. Pressler knows how to endow this character—and the other girls in the home—with defining traits without making them one-dimensional.

When Aunt Lou explains that Halinka's mother was abusive because she "went through very, very difficult times," Halinka does not comprehend how someone who suffered can turn about and inflict suffering. The girl writes "And when I consider it very carefully, I think it should be the other way around: if someone has experienced something bad herself, so that the blows have even hit her soul, then—especially then—she shouldn't hit others."

—Caryn Tamber

Truth in the Time of Illness

Saying It Out Loud
by Joan Abelove
DK Ink, $15.95



Mother-loss is a difficult problem to cope with at any age. However, perhaps the hardest time to deal with such a huge loss is the teenage years. In *Saying It Out Loud*, Joan Abelove writes from the perspective of an adolescent girl, Mindy, whose mother is dying of a brain tumor. This touching book allows the reader to travel with Mindy in her search for answers to questions for which, finally, there are no answers. Her mother's illness has a very huge impact on her and she turns for support to her closest and dearest friend, Gail. When another friend of hers tries to ask about her mom, she simply replies, "I don't talk about her to anyone but Gail."

Painfully, her father is no help; he is there for her mother but cannot connect with his daughter during this tremendously difficult time. At the very end of the book Mindy speaks to her mom as if she is still alive, "I can't take care of dad for you mama…he loves me in his own way. But his own way has so little to do with me it doesn't feel like love at all." This, of course, makes her loss even more traumatic for her. Mindy's mom's terminal illness gives an opportunity for this seemingly perfect family to uncover all secrets and lies. There was much about her mother that Mindy did not know and that she never even thought to question. That is one of the most devastating aspects of Mindy's loss: just when she begins to get to know her mother as a person, she is ripped away from her. Though forced upon her, a seemingly overnight change occurs and she becomes independent and mature with a new understanding of the world. As observers, we, too, change with her and gain a new understanding.

Although Mindy is Jewish, this book does not focus narrowly on her faith. She reaches out to all, including those of us whose mothers are still breathing and healthy. The message is no less true for being predictable—stay close with the ones you love and savor every minute with them. Life is constantly changing for good or ill and no one can ever stop those changes from occurring.

Saying It Out Loud is a beautiful book, an easy read which fills you with such compassion for Mindy. It makes you think about the many questions of life and death, and can leave you full of hope.

—Nonye Gilliard-Sullivan

Circumcision Storybooks

Baby's Bris
by Susan Wilkowski
illustrations by Judith Friedman
Pitspopanny Press, $16.95

Rosie and the Mole
by Judy Silverman
illustrations by Katherine Janus Kahn
Karben, $16.95

In the sea of children's literature dealing with Jewish lifecycle events, one particular ceremony rarely surfaces. Finally, two new children's books tackle a very old subject—circumcision.

Having a baby brother is a big responsibility, as Sophie and Rosie learn in *Baby's Bris* by Susan Wilkowski and *Rosie and the Mole* by Judy Silverman. These two books, written for not-so-much-older siblings, attempt to unravel the mystery behind all the excitement of the *brit milah*, and tackle a little sibling rivalry while they're at it.

In *Rosie and the Mole*, Rosie is frustrated by all the attention the baby is getting. It simply doesn't seem fair that the baby gets a naming ceremony and a *bris*, while Rosie had only a naming ceremony when she was born. When cousin Daniel tells Rosie all about the Mole who is coming to do the *bris*, things begin to change. Rosie knows that moles have sharp claws; suddenly the idea of hurting the baby doesn't seem like such a good one. Mama explains about the *mohel* (ritual circumciser) and what he does, and Rosie discovers that little Sam isn't so bad after all.

Similarly, *Baby's Bris* follows Sophie through the first eight days of her brother's life. Sophie is simultaneously caught up in and jealous of all the excitement, unsure of her role as big sister. When the *mohel* describes a *bris* as a promise of the whole community to help the new baby grow and learn, Sophie realizes that this is her responsibility as well. She begins telling her baby brother all about their relatives, especially Papa Benny, for whom he is named.

These books are sweet ways to remind big brothers and sisters of their continued importance in family life. Both contain a brief clinical section on the *bris*, and Silverman's book has a naming guide and an Older Sibling Certificate. They are, however, lacking in detail insofar as defining a *bris* within the story's context. The explanation is simply that a *bris* involves "removing a bit of skin that the baby doesn't need." The concept of the covenant is briefly mentioned, but neither discusses the story of Abraham or offers any historical context.

If you're Jewish, the birth of a boy baby results in a big party, which can be difficult for an older sibling to deal with, especially big sisters, who never had an equivalent celebration. These books may do well in alleviating jealousy, but are somewhat disappointing in their less-than-revolutionary attitudes about the act itself. When you're talking about genitalia, of course, many parents will want to choose their words carefully, and it seems that these two books would be best used as departure points for further discussion.

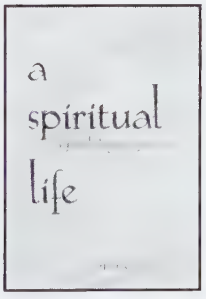
—*A.R.D.*

Change

A shift occurs
after all these years.
The copper sand on
the flat page of the beach
does not succumb to tidal
pull. The gray-eyed wolf
noses in the snow for
blood. Old rituals do not
make sense. What is needed now
is precarious as a lone sunfish
in an ancient ocean, relentless
as the words that fly from my mind
to their perch on the screen.

—*Irene Simon Sipos*

THE GIRLS
Jewish Women of Brownsville, Brooklyn, 1940–1995
CAROLE BELL FORD



Tells the stories of the Jewish women who came of age in Brownsville, Brooklyn, in the 1940s and 1950s—the choices they made, and the boundaries within which they made them.
218 pp/$16.95 pb
isbn 0-7914-4364-7
Illustrated

now available in paperback!
A SPIRITUAL LIFE
A Jewish Feminist Journey
MERLE FELD

"...a soulful memoir ...which includes stories, poems, reflections and prayers."
— *Jewish Week*
264 pp/$19.95 pb
isbn 0-7914-4118-0

State University of New York Press
www.sunypress.edu/orderbook@cupserv.org

Online Book Ordering

Now you can order Jewish feminist books right on LILITH's web site. Each listing includes links to book-buying services that allow you to order any book with just a few clicks of your mouse. Visit www.lilithmag.com.

book

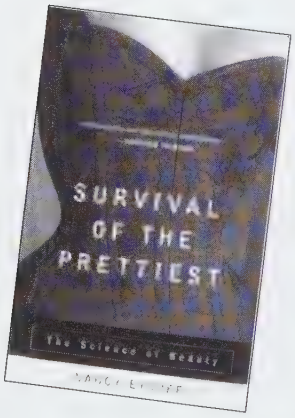
Body Politic

Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery

by Sander L. Gilman,
Princeton University Press, $16.95, paper

Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty

by Nancy Etcoff
Doubleday, $14



Two new books try to cut through our obsession with perfection.

During a time characterized by startling numbers of eating disorders among young women, rapid growth in aesthetic surgery, and billowing profits in the beauty industries, two new books offer fascinating and very different accounts of the national obsession with body alteration and the search for an ideal body.

While tracking the medical practice of aesthetic surgeries, Sander L. Gilman, in *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery,* skillfully reviews alterations in the beauty ideal through time and culture. Appreciating the magnitude of his topic, Gilman primarily traces the history of the nose as the target of repair. Beginning with the rehabilitation of the diseased, syphilitic nose (a rather prominent indicator of the "bad character" of its owner), Gilman walks us through the changing social construction of the ideal nose, elucidating culture's role in driving our perception of what is beautiful.

Using a quite different lens, in *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty,* Nancy Etcoff builds a compelling argument that our interest in beauty, our own and others, is biologically driven. Supporting her case well with evolutionary biology and extensive research on responses to beauty, she argues that certain body and face characteristics are defined by a culture as beautiful because they signal maximum reproductivity and survivability. Unfortunately, instead of sticking to her interesting biological/evolutionary argument—which may indeed offer a *piece* of the beauty puzzle—she offers lengthy diatribes against a simplistic view of the feminist response to beauty construction.

Jewish American women are well aware of shifts in beauty ideals. Zaftig, once a reference to our juiciness, was a sign of health, wealth, fertility, fortitude: all valued commodities in marriageability in their time. In the US, as the century progressed, young Jewish girls and their mothers were eager to alter Jewish features to assist in assimilation (remember hair straightening and nose jobs). Now, Jewish features along with other "ethnic" looks get more media time, but with connotations of the wild, the sexual, the primitive, the other.

Supporting Etcoff's theory that beauty is prized because it signals health, Gilman traces the first aesthetic surgeries as responses to disease and deformity. With the reduction in surgery-related risks, however, came an increase in aesthetic surgery by the non-sick patient. Without political commentary, Gilman delineates the resulting trends in nose surgeries as primarily attempts to alter features associated with particular racial/ethnic groups. To Gilman, "passing" as a member of a desired group, eliminating features associated with being Jewish, Irish, Asian, or African-American, became and continues to be the primary goal of aesthetic surgeries.

What is considered beautiful by any culture in any particular time period reflects the values, beliefs, and conflicts of the time. Emaciation is the current beauty ideal for women. Ninety-five pecent of anorexia diagnoses and 90% of bulimia diagnoses go to women. Women are currently the primary consumers of aesthetic surgeries, 89% in 1996, with surgeries geared towards size reduction almost the exclusive purview of women. As with most beauty ideals of their time, emaciation signifies wealth and leisure. Self-starvation, compulsive over-exercising, and liposuction, as it happens, are quite uncommon in starving nations. Etcoff's argument that beauty standards are solely built as signifiers of maximum reproductivity falls apart a bit in the case of eating disorders, as a defining criterion of anorexia is loss of menses.

Gilman's historical premise would tell us that the emaciated woman is trying to pass. With what group is she trying to escape association? I would argue it is a propagandized view of feminists: hungry, demanding, angry, militant women, insistent on their own satiation. Interesting to note the similarities between the stereotyped descriptions of the feminist and the Jewish woman as "loud, pushy, Jewish broad," or "needy, entitled Jewish American princess."

What inadvertently ties the eating disordered woman to this undesirable group of feminists? Her power. The population most at risk for eating disorders is our young, bright, powerful, high achieving, overachieving and/or clearly underachieving-for-their-potential girls. The eating-disordered woman is most certainly trying to "pass," presenting herself as a nice little needless gal rather than the powerhouse of a woman she is.

Let us be critical about the current construction of beauty in the self-depriving anorexic. Let us commit ourselves to rising perhaps a bit above history, to using consciousness to counterbalance biology, and to not falling prey to old messages, in our world, or in our genes.

—Karen L. Smith

Garden Primitives
by Danielle Sosin
Coffee House Press, $14.95, paper

Foreign Brides
by Elena Lappin
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $22

The Law of Return
Maxine Rodburg
Carnegie Mellon University Press, $15.95

The Free Thinkers: Two Novellas
Layle Silbert
Seven Stories Press, $25

The County of Birches
Judith Kalman
St. Martin's Press, $21.95

A book of extraordinary literary prowess and zero overt Jewish content, Danielle Sosin's most recent book is not irrelevant to the Jewish feminist understanding. *Garden Primitives* is in many respects a collection of stories about a world so vertiginously out of whack that the reader almost fears certain characters will fall right off the globe. In the world of the *Garden Primitives*, the personal and the political have blown out of balance in tandem.

"Submersion," in which a mother accidentally falls asleep while her son is playing in the ocean, is a one-woman tragedy. Joan awakens from drugged sedation, having been medicated for grief-induced hysteria following the loss of her son. In "Ice Age," a farmer studies geology obsessively, paying particular attention to the minutiae of glaciers and particular homage to the power of cold and dark to shut down planets and destroy creatures as massive as the dinosaurs, leaving naught but silence in their place.

These stories, along with the other ten, are told by a narrator who apparently has no idea what's coming next and who, therefore, does not give us the slightest omniscient help understanding the characters' seemingly bizarre behavior. We have little choice but to follow this dissociative voice, only half trusting that in the end it will all make sense.

• • •

By contrast, the world represented by Elena Lappin in *Foreign Brides* is deliciously orderly, profoundly just, and funny. The artificial structure of the book is portentous: In a book in which each and every protagonist is a foreign bride, how could the stories not end as tidily?

In "Peacocks," Vera arrives in England as the mail-order bride of Charles. To Charles, we learn "Vera was a kinky dream come true." He goes so far as to ask her to wear boots on her trip from Moscow, so that he can recognize her instantly "and walk away if there is anything distasteful about her appearance." Due to a peculiar and complex chain of events, however, Vera winds up the family's sole breadwinner, calling all the shots.

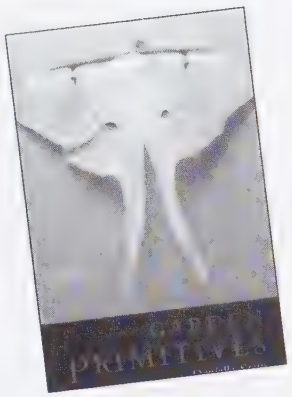
The *Foreign Brides* stories invariably have these tidy endings, and read like morality plays on speed. In "Noa and Noah," we are introduced to Everywoman Noa, Israeli bride of the English Noah. A secular Israeli, she made a rash decision when she was young and spoke too little English to understand what her Orthodox husband-to-be was saying. Now, living with her implacable in-laws in the U.K.—the anesthetizing effect of her steamy sex life with Noah worn off—she has come to believe she got a raw deal. The sexy and mysterious words he utters in bed have turned out, after all, to be the names of football teams.

What's a woman to do? Well, first, she starts serving her overbearing kin *treyf* meat, and, as it happens, has an affair with the non-kosher butcher. There's a lot of camp in these stories. The very premise of "Noa and Noah," with the parallel names, has a Tweedle-Dee-sets-out-to-trick-Tweedle-Dum feeling to it. So we're not entirely surprised when they decide to stay together—vegetarians to the end.

• • •

In *The Law of Return,* a series of linked stories by Maxine Rodburg, Debbie begins to make sense of her family's complicated history. Her father, first-generation American, brings the experience of the Holocaust with him from Europe to New Jersey, where he and his brothers are petty criminals with apparent ties to organized crime. Debbie's father's shady dealings—which seem, mostly, to involve things falling off trucks—produce a residence in a posh neighborhood for the family, expensive jewelry for his wife and tchatchkes like cameras for his children.

It hardly seems worth it. Particularly for Debbie's mother, who is perpetually hiding her expensive junk from her jealous sisters. (We discover her cutting labels from expensive stores out of her children's clothing, replacing them with labels from stores where her sisters might shop.) Debbie's father wants better for his daughters than he has. He wants them to be good college girls, safe wives who never have to learn how to scrap for survival. But he does not seem terribly tormented by the immorality of his actions. He seems, rather, proud and bloated, slipping rings from his endless supply



of costly cigars around Debbie's fingers.

Arguably, the sins of the father are visited upon the child. Debbie grows up into a singularly stagnant sort of being, far too happy with her spiritual inheritance. As a feminist text, *The Law of Return* panders to readers in its descriptions of a sexist upbringing, but never manages to convey the real impact of such events in a girl's life.

• • •

The various narrators of Layle Silbert's *The Free Thinkers: Two Novellas* are Russian immigrants to the United States and their children, making their way a the turn of the last century. The characters have the sorts of names Jews used to have in America: Ida, Bessie, Eena, Ryah, Yudl. But the issues the women deal with are entirely contemporary. The book's politics center on pressure to marry; the possibility of living with, rather than marrying, a lover; division of labor between men and women; and following one's own dreams and ambitions. Even those moral issues that arise from the book's specific historical issues—such as American Jews' choosing to ignore the fate of those who are dying in Europe—have application today, as the Jewish community copes with worldwide incidents of genocide. In a sense, it is unfortunate that Silbert locates these issues in the last century, amongst the Idas and Ryahs, giving the impression that things have changed more than they really have.

• • •

The tragic story of a Hungarian family's experience in Europe and in the post-Holocaust New World, *The County of Birches*, by Judith Kalman, is a beautiful cross-generational herstory. It is a palpably real portrait of family life, childhood, and what it is to be Jewish and female in America, with relationships—between sisters, between children and the parents, and between parents—masterfully written. Growing up as the phoenix risen from the ashes of the Holocaust is a rough road for a girl. On her shoulders is placed the burden of making cosmic reparations to her parents, through her success, for all they lost in Europe. The burden is particularly onerous because the parents' definition of "success" is not always clear. Lili slaves away through grade school, high school and college, winning academic acclaim that seems to bring her mother and father joy. But when, after graduating college years early, she is offered a scholarship to graduate school, her mother suddenly changes the rules, derisively telling Lili she can't stay a school girl forever. Lili stomps out into the snow, but comes back with years of ambition quieted, years of hard work shelved.

— Chanita Baumhaft

In a new history of feminism, the author recounts the great anger, as well as the great moments, that emerged in the movement.

The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America

by Ruth Rosen
Viking, $34.95

What do young women and men know about how gender worked in the world before the modern women's movement? Virtually nothing, history professor Ruth Rosen discovered. Her students were utterly unaware that there ever was a time when a married woman could not get credit without her husband's signature or that newspapers ran separate help wanted ads for men (doctor, lawyer, accountant, chief) and for women (secretary, nurse, and filing clerk). *The World Split Open*, Rosen's first-rate survey of the origins, impact, and aftershocks of the second wave of American feminism, reminds us, in elegant and affecting prose, of how far we have come and how far we have yet to go.

An early women's movement activist and author of *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*, Rosen synthesizes for a broad audience existing scholarship on the origins of the women's movement. She shows it deeply embedded in Left politics, the Civil Rights movement, and the malcontent of 1950s mothers who, knowing the idealized portraits broadcast on national television never represented their lives, aspired to other futures for their daughters. Rosen understands the distinctions among those daughters, how the timing of one's birth fixed her experience of the second wave of feminism. Those born during World War II became the shock troops of women's liberation and its first leaders. Their younger sisters, born right after the war, discovered feminism in college. But the youngest, those born after 1950, became privileged, "the first women to shape adult lives amid the new opportunities and burdens created by the modern feminist movement."

Rosen chronicles the familiar (to the historian, but not to the student) turning points of the early stages of the second wave of American feminism—President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, *The Feminine Mystique*, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, the founding of the National Organization of Women and the emergence of Women's Liberation.

She refuses to shy away from conveying the great, and often damaging, anger that erupted among activists with different agendas and timetables for carrying out common goals. She captures splits between heterosexual and lesbian feminists, and the envy and ire provoked as the media anointed some, like Gloria Steinem, the right to speak for all.

Rosen also exposes the FBI's infiltration of the movement. Searching for communist subversives

among feminists, FBI informers reported women discussing abortion rights and birth control, and when they named names, they included activists like Elizabeth 'Katy' Stanton. In retrospect, it is hilarious to imagine the FBI scouring the country for the suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who died in 1902, but at the time fear of FBI agents eroded trust within the movement and contributed to its tensions.

Rosen's sweeping narrative ignores Jewish feminism and loses historical perspective as it gets closer to the present. Nevertheless, this book renders a great service. It reports that in the early years, more than 500 feminist publications emerged, LILITH among them. Rosen reminds those of us who have read feminist literature for more than a quarter century of much that we forgot. And she teaches a new generation with no memory of a time before feminism just how modern women courageously and daringly split the world open.

—Pamela S. Nadell

Coming Home to Jerusalem: A Personal Journey

by Wendy Orange
Simon & Schuster, $25

Do you ever yearn, reading "objective" journalism or trying to get the news from the fatuous soundbites of television, for some honestly subjective perspective, some reportage able to probe immediate events with intelligence and information but also human feeling? For me, the journalism of Wendy Orange, written in Israel in the early 1990s, provided precious glimpses of what felt like genuine truth. Her descriptive powers were those of a novelist, her homework was always done, she seemed miraculously able to elicit from interviews (with Jews and Palestinians, politicians, soldiers, peaceworkers and peace haters, and ordinary men and women) the essence of their personal experience and convictions. All this took place within the cauldron of history—and irony and compassion were the twin laser beams of her Jewishness. I trusted her. Now in this memoir of her love affair with Jerusalem and Israel, I see why.

Twice-divorced in her early forties, working as a psychologist in Cambridge, Mass., suffering for years from "mysterious dejections and a sense of exile," Orange on impulse attends a peace conference in Jerusalem—and is smitten by the city, the land, by "wave after wave of extroverted Mediterranean energy." A few weeks after her return, she is packing clothes, toys and books on Judaica, Israeli history and politics. With her five-year old daughter, Eliza, and a 17-year-old foster daughter, Jackie, she makes *aliyah*.

Most of *Coming Home to Jerusalem* is the personal chronicle of the three years Orange spends immersed in the nuances, languages, friends, views, food, and, of course, the politics of Israel. Urged by a New York editor to write about Israeli-Palestinian relations, she decides to overcome her fear of Arabs. Meeting Palestinian journalists and activists, lawyers, psychiatrists and elderly refugees, shopkeepers and children, men who describe being tortured in Israeli prisons and women who serve sweet tea in homes adorned with photographs of boys killed in the *Intifada*, she tastes "the varieties of Palestinian consciousness, sweetness, depression, generosity, cunning, frustration, along with the more predictable black hate that fills some hearts." She spends time with Rapprochement, a group that organizes face-to-face and family-to-family dialogues between Jews and Palestinians, learns that its techniques were used in the year-long secret talks culminating in the 1993 Oslo Accords, and comes to see one of its leaders, Judith Green, as the Jewish equivalent of the righteous gentiles who protected Jews during the Holocaust.

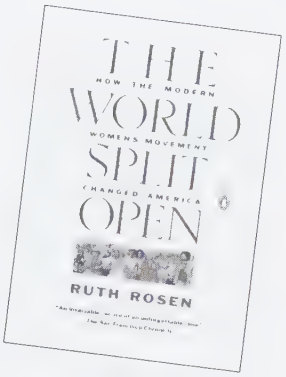
We see Orange oscillating between hope and despair at newsworthy events and personal ones. Her romance with a Sephardi taxi driver illuminates class conflicts among Israelis, as her middle-class Ashkenazi friends cannot accept him, and vice-versa. When she leaves Israel because her daughter is diagnosed as severely dyslexic and needs to attend an American school, we share her heartbreak at being wrenched from the one place she has ever felt at home. Return trips after Prime Minister Rabin's assassination, suicide bus bombings and Israeli elections leave her still committed to the peace process, grieving over the obstacles created by extremists on both sides. Yet it is not ideology that, in the end, dominates this book. Rather, it is Orange's attention to individuals and to the emotional tone of events that makes her writing so appealing. "As we who are parents tune into our children," she remarks toward the close of *Coming Home to Jerusalem*, "I felt shifts on the ground in an unmediated, intuitive way." I wish more journalists resembled her.

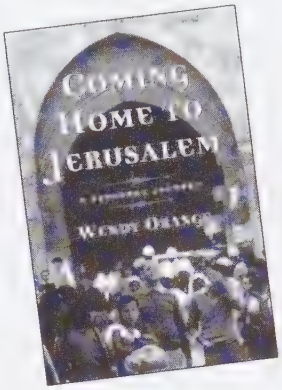
—Alicia Ostriker

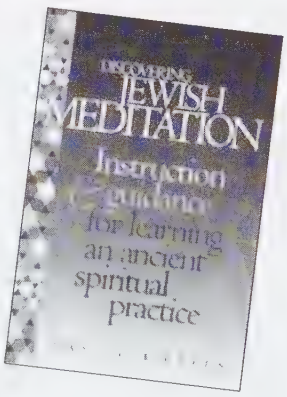
Discovering Jewish Meditation: Instruction & Guidance for Learning an Ancient Spiritual Practice

by Nan Fink Gefen
Jewish Lights, $16.95

Jewish meditation retreats are booming. Jewish yoga—twisting ourselves into the shapes of Hebrew letters—is on the Web. And Nan Fink Gefen's step-







BRANDEIS BOOKS

Balancing Work and Love

Jewish Women Facing the Family-Career Challenge

ELAINE GRUDIN DENHOLTZ

"Denholtz's interviews are astonishing. They establish clearly how women are carrying the burdens of motherhood and families as well as being in the work force. Her women are real and the stories are poignant, crossing boundaries of religion, race, and culture." — SOROSH ROSHAN, President of The National Council of Women, USA

Cloth, $24.95

Beyond Patriarchy

Jewish Fathers and Families

LAWRENCE H. FUCHS

"Fuchs's central question—how do we end patriarchy without getting rid of fathers?—reflects his commitment to gender equality and to fatherhood. His ability to fuse intellectual arguments with his own passion for creating a just world is a mark of all of Fuchs's scholarship. The book's optimism that patriarchy is not inevitable and can change is encouraging while his focus on Jewish fathers will help us to move towards a model of gender studies that is inclusive of men."

— SHELLY TENENBAUM, Coeditor of *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*

Cloth, $24.95

What Makes Women Sick?

Maternity, Modesty, and Militarism in Israeli Society

SUSAN SERED

"Sered [offers] a 'unified theory of women's oppression' for Israel. It is an extremely readable book—I gulped it in one sitting—thought provoking, and painful, for it is presented as a committed lover's critique. Sered is a transformative intellectual who engages readers in disillusioning education about the imperfections of a reality in the making, so that it can be corrected."— LEAH SHAKDIEL, Ben Gurion University

Brandeis Series on Jewish Women

Cloth, $50.00 / Paper, $19.95

Suddenly Jewish

Jews Raised as Gentiles Discover Their Jewish Roots

BARBARA KESSEL

"Kessel interviewed over 160 people who were raised as non-Jews and later learned they were of Jewish descent . . . Readers of [these] diverse first-person narrative accounts will not only come to a deeper understanding of a little-recognized situation that is more common than we may have thought, but will themselves breathe a sigh of recognition and relief."

— *Library Journal*

Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, & Life

Cloth, $19.95

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF **New England**

Hanover, NH 03755-2055 • Orders 800-421-1561 • www.upne.com

by-step instructions take the mystery out of meditation. And still the thought persists: Is Jewish meditation just Buddha in a *tallis* (one of the catchy titles at a Jewish meditation weekend)?

Gefen goes back to the Bible for early references to meditation, weak though they may be. When she brings in the Kabbalists' link to divine sparks through meditation, Jewish meditation seems on firmer ground, as an esoteric part of our tradition. The Hasidic embrace of meditation brings it closer to the Jewish mainstream. And Gefen makes it clear that Jewish meditation is a work in progress, that our evolution as Jews in a time of spiritual searching demands something more immediately, spiritually accessible and less sexist than rigorous Orthodoxy.

The author's personal perspective strikes a chord: Jewish meditation as the great equalizer—between men and women, between Jewish scholars and the Jewishly ambivalent. And her belief that Jewish meditation exists not just to bring us closer to God but to actively involve us in *tikkun olam*—repairing the world—resonates for both religious and non-religious social activists. But does meditation necessarily lead to social activism? Okay, so we Jews are not a purely contemplative lot, but does it follow that there's a purpose for "soul work" and the "point is for us to become more fully the people we can be so that we contribute increasingly to *tikkun olam*"?

As someone who went to Israel back in 1972 to check out my Jewish roots and ended up being initiated into TM, Transcendental Meditation, in Jerusalem, I'm open to connecting my meditation to my Judaism. But I haven't yet found that chanting the Jewish words prescribed in Gefen's book transports me into a Jewish realm. Gefen's instructions are simple, step-by-step, specific. The admonitions to be patient and non-judgmental are doubtlessly good advice for all of us stiff-necked, achievement-oriented Jews. Still, I wonder is it possible to learn to meditate out of a book when traditionally one is supposed to have a teacher?

For those still hung up on that syncretic Buddha-in-a-*tallis*, Gefen points out that Buddhism doesn't have a monopoly on mindfulness. In finding ways to move from Jewish meditation to becoming more knowledgeable and comfortable with the contents of this religion, Gefen recommends observing Shabbat. With observation comes the mindfulness of being present in the moment. "Observing"—how compact in its double meaning: immersing yourself in the rules/keeping your distance. Gefen also recommends blessings for increasing our awareness of the world around us.

Gefen makes the point that in the past, Jewish meditation revolved around traditional Jewish observance. Now we can choose how we want to be Jewish. For one reader at least, this makes spiritual sense.

—Amy Stone

Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women

by Chava Weissler

Beacon Press, $18.50

This book is a scholarly examination of the religious, sociological, and ethnographic implications of the prayer form known as

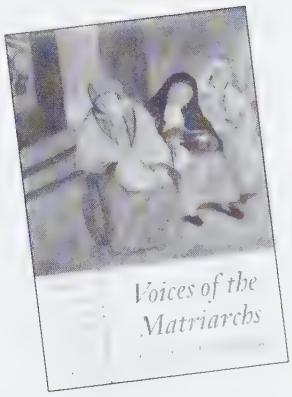
tkhines. Weissler contrasts these supplicatory prayers, written in Yiddish especially for women, with other popular Yiddish devotional writings, focusing especially on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She puts them in the context of the mystical writings that influenced male scholarship of the time, and also looks at the progeny of these prayers, created by contemporary Jewish feminists.

A variety of devotions, prayers and stories based on the weekly Torah portion were written in the common language. These were provided for women who most frequently could not understand Hebrew (though they might be able to read it) and for what Weissler calls "men who were like women," men who were not part of the scholarly elite. Within this body of literature, home-centered prayers are emphasized. We see the pious woman in her kitchen, saying her personal prayer as she "takes *challah*" while preparing the Sabbath loaves or as she covers her eyes and murmurs her prayer after lighting the Shabbat candles. The images in these prayers are of the Biblical heroines, role models for women living religious lives.

What is hard to find within these pages are the *tkhines* themselves. *Voices of the Matriarchs* provides copious background material about how such writings came to be and how the women for whom they were written fit into their Jewish society, but scant examples of the prayers themselves. The few *tkhines* provided give insights into the longings of the women who prayed them. An example is a *tkhine* for lighting Shabbat candles:

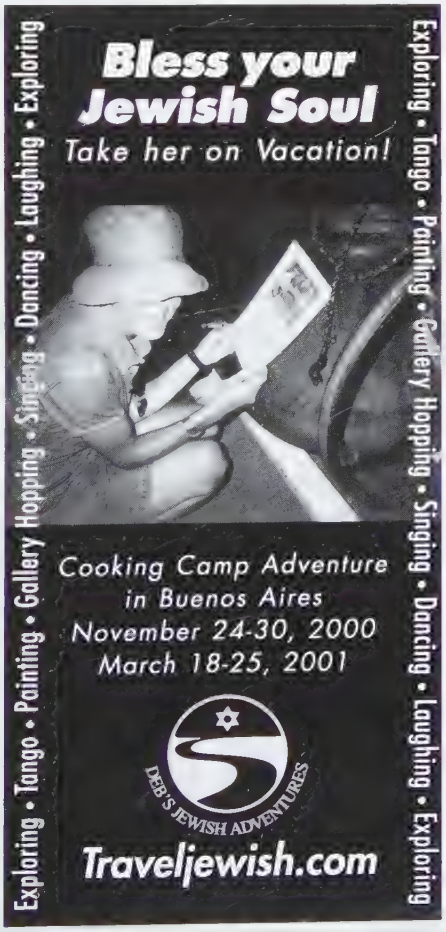
> "Lord of the world, may [my observance of the] commandment of kindling the lights be accepted as the act of the High Priest when he kindled the lights in the dear Temple was accepted. Your speech is a light to my feet; may the feet of my children walk on God's path."

The *tkhines* were women's prayers, but not all of them were written by women. In one entire chapter, Weissler demonstrates that different versions of the same prayer, as interpreted by men and by women, contrast their different world views, especially when they contain such biblical references as the implications of Eve's apple bite. Weissler shows how male-created literature views women as direct inheritors of Eve's sinfulness, the result being menstruation and painful childbirth. The women's literature, by contrast, is "troubled by the idea that all women suffer because of Eve's sin."



Online Book Ordering

Now you can order Jewish feminist books right on LILITH's web site. Each listing includes links to book-buying services that allow you to order any book with just a few clicks of your mouse. Try this service today at lilithmag.com


Bless your Jewish Soul
Take her on Vacation!
Exploring • Tango • Painting • Gallery Hopping • Singing • Dancing • Laughing • Exploring
Cooking Camp Adventure in Buenos Aires
November 24-30, 2000
March 18-25, 2001
DEB'S JEWISH ADVENTURES
Traveljewish.com

Continuing Jewish Education

The Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education invites you to join us for the best classes in Jewish Education.

Shabbat Series

October 28, 2000
The Cult of the Three Rachels
Susan Sered, Ph.D.

January 13, 2001
Location, Location, Location: The Space and Place of Biblical Women
Risa Levitt Kohn, Ph.D.

March 3, 2001
Is Sephardic Dance Too Sexy? A Lecture and Movement Workshop
Judith Brin Ingber

Best Books in Jewish Education for Jewish Women

The Shabbat Series: Excellence in Education for Jewish Women
A Ceremonies Sampler: New Rites, Celebrations of Jewish Women
Taking the Fruit: Modern Women's Tales of the Bible
The San Diego Women's Haggadah, Second Edition
Women Speak To God, The Prayers and Poems of Jewish Women
Midlife, A Rite of Passage and The Wise Woman, A Celebration

For complete class schedule and books brochure, write or call:

Woman's Institute
For Continuing Jewish Education
4126 Executive Dr. • La Jolla, California 92037
(619) 442-2666

Where they can be found, the true voices—prayers written by women for women—sanctify the everyday and allow their speakers to pour out their hearts. Their modern counterparts, new prayers and rituals, seek to do likewise. A modern *tkhine* or meditation for lighting Shabbat candles, by Navah Harlow from the Conservative prayerbook *Siddur Sim Shalom,* is more personal than its predecessor, but reflects the same impulse as the earlier ones cited by Weissler: "*Ribbono shel Olam* [Lord of the universe], when I am lonely, help me to realize that I am never alone....Hear my plea through the merit of our ancestors, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, so that the spark which they kindled will never be extinguished."

Readers interested in hearing more of these voices might want to seek out some of the compilations of early *tkhines* as well as the modern ceremonies referenced by Weissler.

—Debbie Perlman

Chanita Baumhaft is a writer living in New York.

Pamela S. Nadell is Professor of History and Director of the Jewish Studies Program at American University and author of Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985, *which was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.*

Poet Alicia Ostriker is a former poetry editor of Lilith.

Debbie Perlman is psalmist-in-residence at Beth Emet The Free Synagogue in Evanston, Illinois, and author of Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing & Praise.

Karen L. Smith MSS, LSW is a clinical social worker in private practice in Philadelphia, and consultant to The Renfrew Center, a women's mental health facility specializing in eating disorders.

Amy Stone is one of the founders of Lilith. ■

HaSha'ar — Preparing Leaders to Transform Jewish Education

DRISHA INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION and BEIT RABBAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN JEWISH EDUCATION are proud to co-sponsor

השער
HA SHA'AR
A PROGRAM OF JEWISH STUDIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE DAY SCHOOL EDUCATORS

HASHA'AR IS DESIGNED to encourage exceptional young women and men who are devoted to Jewish learning to pursue careers in Jewish education.

Fellows receive an $18,000 stipend to support their participation in a unique, year-long program which integrates the study of Jewish texts and the ideas and practice of education.

Fellows commit to teaching in a day school for the following two years, while receiving ongoing support and professional development from the HaSha'ar faculty.

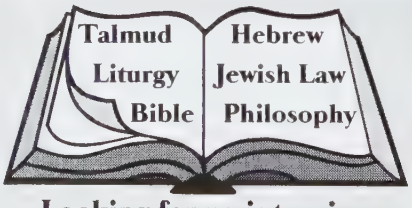
We welcome inquiries from potential applicants and other interested members of the community.

Fellowship cycle begins July 2001.

For further information contact RUTH S. FAGEN, Director
131 West 86th Street • New York, NY 10024
Phone (212) 595-8153 • Fax (212) 595-0679 • Email hashaar@beitrabban-drisha.org

HaSha'ar is funded by a major grant from the Nash Family Foundation

דרישה
Drisha Institute



Looking for an intensive intellectual environment? Join women from around the country for a stimulating learning experience!

Drisha Institute for Jewish Education
131 West 86th Street
New York, NY 10024
(212) 595-0307
inquiry@drisha.org

Fall Semester
September 11-December 15

Honor Book
Association of Jewish Libraries
Sydney Taylor Award

BABY'S BRIS

Susan Wilkowski • Illustrated by Judith Friedman
$16.95 hardcover • $6.95 paperback

The first eight day's of Baby's life through the eyes of his big sister. "Soft pastel paintings beautifully reflect the warmth of Sophie's family and their Jewish traditions." *Booklist*

Books on Jewish themes for young children and their families
Call for free catalog

KAR-BEN PUBLISHING
6800 Tildenwood Lane · Rockville, MD 20852
1-800-4KARBEN (1-800-452-7236)
Website and E-store: www.karben.com

You can make a tax-deductible contribution to LILITH to honor a woman who has been important in your life.
(888) 2-LILITH
(254-5484)

Julia Revisited

Coming Out as a Jew and a Lesbian Watching Lillian Hellman's Classic Story

by Bonnie J. Morris

There never was another movie like *Julia*. There never was a moment more vulnerable, dramatic, and romantic than that scene where Jane Fonda, as Lillian Hellman, tells Vanessa Redgrave "I love you, Julia," and Vanessa Redgrave, as the heroine Julia, sits proud and tall and wild in Jane's adoring arms around the campfire.

During my last three years as a teenager (1978 to 1981) *Julia* was the only movie in my life, the sanctum sanctorum of my brooding adolescent lesbianism. The film is an adaptation of Lillian Hellman's short story about her beloved childhood friend, who became an anti-fascist activist and was subsequently murdered by Nazi agents.

Julia is an extraordinary tribute to the friend whose convictions often baffled even Hellman. The impassioned Julia, as she did in real life, moves from their teenage games in America to medical studies with Freud in Vienna, then to radical socialism, and finally uses her family fortune to save Jews and political prisoners in Hitler's Europe. Hellman, at first reluctant and frightened, is enlisted to assist her friend's resistance work by playing courier, and though a Jew herself, travels by train through Nazi Germany with Julia's money. Soon after their clandestine meeting to exchange the smuggled booty, Julia is murdered, and Hellman begins a fruitless search for Julia's hidden baby—a baby named for Lillian.

I saw *Julia* for the first time when I was seventeen, with a friend whose father had survived the concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen. It was a period when I was awakening, popeyed, to the legacy of the Holocaust which was my own family's history but had hardly been addressed in my schooling at all. An insightful adult friend, who saw me struggling to locate my identity as a Jew and as a woman writer, recommended seeing *Julia*. Thenceforth I lived on a steady diet of Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave and their campfire embrace.

The adult Julia was portrayed by the unutterably gorgeous Vanessa Redgrave, and I learned that this casting choice had troubled many in the American Jewish community. Redgrave had recently caused havoc by supporting the PLO and denouncing Israeli Jews as "Zionist hoodlums." Some Jews urged a boycott of *Julia*, and I—torn between Judaism and lesbianism—found I could not forego the power of the movie and its actresses, even while I was pining over an Israeli girl at my high school.

Like many young feminists I had been starving for a storyline about women's political convictions and losses and intense love for one another, with male characters in the background. Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave themselves declared to the press that *Julia* had no "aberrant" overtones, but we who read the original short story in Hellman's book *Pentimento* knew the real score. Hellman had carefully written, in a paragraph never incorporated into the film's narration, "In those years, and the years after Julia's death, I have had plenty of time to think about the love I had for her, too strong and too complicated to be defined as only the sexual yearnings for one girl for another. And yet certainly that was there."

Fonda and Redgrave declared the film had no "aberrant" overtones, but we who read the original short story knew the real score.

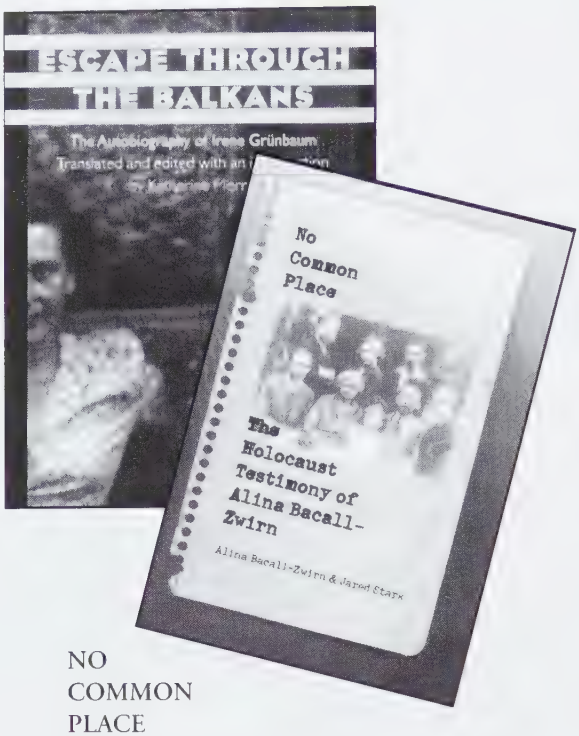
"I love you, Julia," says Lillian Hellman. In the film, Julia says nothing and does nothing in response, merely permitting the radiant Hellman to snuggle into her arms; but in the original story, Hellman wrote "She stared at me and took my hand to her face." Simply knowing, when I was eighteen, that Hellman and Julia had lived these moments at eighteen themselves made possible a world of risk and woman-loving. And yet, the Hollywood film *Julia* denied this might be so. On screen, a drunken young man, Sammy, hints that Hellman and Julia have been adolescent lovers. "The whole world knows about you and Julia," he leers, and Jane Fonda, as Hellman, slaps his face so hard he falls backward, and she overturns the table and walks out.

The scene is powerful enough to have many interpretations. But at seventeen, the message I got was loud and clear: how dare anyone imply that women's love for one another might contain an element of passion and desire! I reflected on this logic as a pimply, hormonal teenager in the dark. Every film I'd seen where a woman slapped a man or otherwise knocked him silly made clear that this was permissible if he had been "fresh." Audiences everywhere went home reminded that to call a strong woman a lesbian is the ultimate insult, to be answered with violence.

I never once forgot that the movie was about Lillian Hellman, a Jewish woman writer and a role model for me, who, when called before Joseph McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee declared "I will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions," and rather than naming names was blacklisted for years. I felt, in the slap delivered by Jane Fonda, all of Hellman's rage that the innuendoes of smug men—like McCarthy and his minions—were all it took to silence women's writing, women's credibility as political agents.

When, confused and irritable, I finally re-read Hellman's short story to see if she really had slapped Sammy's face, I was surprised by what I found:

> He said he rather liked his sister Anne-Marie, because he had slept with her when she was sixteen and


ESCAPE THROUGH THE BALKANS
No Common Place
The Holocaust Testimony of Alina Bacall-Zwirn
Alina Bacall-Zwirn & Jared Stark

NO
COMMON
PLACE
The Holocaust Testimony of
Alina Bacall-Zwirn
By Alina Bacall-Zwirn and Jared Stark

No Common Place interweaves a survivor's story with her reflections on the impact of her traumatic past on herself and her family.
$30 cloth

now in paper
ESCAPE THROUGH THE BALKANS
The Autobiography of Irene Grünbaum
Edited, Translated, and with an introduction by Katherine Morris

"A breathtaking story by a gifted writer . . ."
—*Women's Review of Books*
$12 paper

now in paper
BUDAPEST DIARY
In Search of the Motherbook
By Susan Suleiman

"Suleiman lyrically describes her quest and the complex interaction of the Eastern Europe of the past and present."—*Boston Globe*
$14.95 paper

publishers of Bison Books
800-755-1105 www.nebraskapress.unl.edu

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS

he was eighteen. Then, perhaps because I had made a sound, he said who the hell was I to talk, everybody knew about Julia and me....I leaned across the table, slapped Sammy in the face, got up, turned over the table and went home.

How different was this, the original version, from the movie's homophobic scene! In real life, Lillian Hellman took a whack at Sammy for comparing her romantic relationship to his incestuous knowledge of his sister. Yet in the film, Sammy declares it was his sister who initiated their sexual relationship. "My little sister gave me a look, she gave me a tender touch and within minutes..." Watching those scenes, audiences might believe that real women do not suffer being called lesbians, but willingly suffer, or even initiate, the crime of incest.

I saw *Julia* for the last time at age 19, when I was immersed in Judaic studies and reading *Pirkei Avot*. This Talmud selection contains Hillel's famous proverb "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I and if not now, when?" I was studying that passage when I saw *Julia* again and heard Julia say to Lillian Hellman, "We can only do today what we can do today, and today you did it for us."

That line is in Hellman's original short story; it is the greatest modern parallel to Hillel's quote that I have found. It is a mantra of feminist action and interdependence. The we in it, of collective action, is also a smaller we of two strong women loving each other across the chaos of the twentieth century. And it meant, for me, the sliding of my Jewish consciousness over my lesbian consciousness in perfect bonding, at long last; which is a lot to be grateful for, from one imperfect movie. ■

Bonnie J. Morris teaches women's studies at George Washington University and Georgetown University. She is the author of two books on Jewish women's history. This essay is adapted from Girl Reel: A Lesbian Remembers Growing Up at the Movies *(Coffee House Press, 2000).*

TIES THAT BIND

continued from page 48

The six of us who compose today's *chevra* group form pairs holding either end of the set of ribbons. We wind, counting in Hebrew, our prescribed number of turns and form a half-bow. All the closures are done, except one.

The plain pine coffin is ready. Sprinkled inside is a handful of soil from the land of Israel. We lower the body of our friend into the wooden box that will cradle her into the earth. We make final adjustments—straightening a crease, patting a mittened hand. The coffin cover is placed but not fixed. The *chevra* is still. Tears spill over as we recite a brief prayer asking forgiveness for any indiscreet word, thought, or gesture any of us may have committed during our task.

Pallbearers now, we wheel the coffin into the crowded entry where a *shomer*, a watcher, sits, reciting Psalms. The body has been attended this way since the moment of death. Two women from the family of the deceased await us. We move the pine cover over so they can perform a last tender gesture, a final intimate rite for their sister. Holding hands, they wind and tie the ribbons of the open bootie. Ties of love, ties that bind the anguish of broken hearts so that healing can begin. ■

Michelle Friedman, M.D., lives with her family in Manhattan, where she practices psychiatry and writes.

"I will greatly bless you and make your descendants numerous as the stars in the heavens..."

Envelop yourself in the "Star Legacy" today

This eternal promise made to Abraham and Sarah by God has now found exquisite expression in an exciting, limited-edition new collection of tallitot, kippot, and bags: The "Star Legacy" collection from Harwin Studios.

Harwin Studios/Dept. B
9101 SW 15th Ave.
Portland, OR 97219
503/245-8900
fax 503/246-7479
www.harwinstudios.com
info@harwinstudios.com

Getting Married?

Make your wedding a meaningful Jewish experience. Register for great books and music with the Weill Gift Registry at **www.mightygift.com**

Sacred texts and commentaries, Jewish thought, Jewish living, reference books, cookbooks, jazz, classical, rock and more!

Log on to **www.mightygift.com** to:

Create a wedding registry
Shop for yourself or a friend
Read interviews with authors and original articles.

WEILL GIFT REGISTRY

For the stuff that makes a house a home.

tallitot for women & men
custom chuppot &
synagogue art

510/843-5280
nkatzart@aol.com
www.nkatzart.com

Handmade Art For Jewish Life

specializing in Ketubot

I will work with you to create a meaningful and extraordinary ketubah.

for more information see
www.solsticedesign.bigstep.com
or call me, Ginny Reel, at 520.324-0390

Jewish party and paper goods
...fun and affordable!

www.paperjudaica.com 410-602-2900 877-YENTA-18

Where else would you find a secular feminist sitting in the same room with an Orthodox man, discussing the future of Judaism?

JEWISH.COMMUNITY

Every day, hundreds of people from all walks of life congregate in the Jewish Community Online chat rooms to debate, give support, flirt, and say what's on their minds. Come join us!

America Online

On America Online at Keyword: JEWISH
For a start-up kit with 50 FREE hours, call 1•800•729•4499
...and read Lilith at Keyword: JEWISH NEWS

Girls Relationships

Letters from camp? Here's a place to send that sentimental stuff you've stashed away. For research about American Jewish youth culture 1945-1970, send letters, diaries, newsletters or other materials from religious, secular, socialist, Yiddishist, Y and JCC camps. Letters will be photocopied and returned. *Riv-Ellen Prell, American Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612)624-0017; prell001@tc.umn.edu.*

Ophelia's Mom. The psychologist mother of Sara Shandler, teen creator of the bestseller, *Ophelia Speaks: Adolescent Girls Write About Their Search for Self*, Nina Shandler, is—with her daugher's blessing—gathering mothers' thoughts and stories for *Ophelia's Mom.* Here is an opportunity to shed light on your daughter-driven challenges. Send your thoughts and stories by September 30 to: *Nina Shandler, Ophelia's Mom, 13 Willard Rd., Sturbridge, MA 01566; ninashand@aol.com: opheliasmom.com.*

Diverse Communities

Food Shortages threatening ten million people in Ethiopia. A coalition of North American Jewish organizations assists victims on a non-sectarian basis. Tax-deductible contributions to JDC-Jewish Coalition for Aid to Ethiopia may be sent to: *Jewish Coalition for Aid to Ethiopia, c/o American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 711 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017.*

Journal Bet Debora Berlin offers the experiences and thoughts of Jewish female leaders of post-Holocaust Europe. Edited by by Lisa Dammig, Rachel Monika Herweg and Elisa Klapheck, published in German, Russian and English. The first issue includes papers from the May 1999 "Conference of Euopean Women Rabbis, Cantors, Rabbinically Educated and Interested Jewish Women and Men." Send $3 to receive the 62-page English version from *Lilith, 250 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10107; LaraBLD@aol.com; www.hagalil.com/bet-debora*

Egypt was home to 80,000 mostly French-speaking Jews before 1948. Today they are dispersed around the globe. Producing a directory, organizing future international conferences and reunions, expanding a collection of videotaped interviews, and publishing a newsletter are among the activities of *International Association of Jews from Egypt, 2416 Quentin Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11229; (718)339-0337; sanuav@stjohns.edu*

The Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Institute, an international pioneer in pluralistic adult Jewish education, now has 50 schools around the world. The launch of its website creates a genuine global learning community. *Nancy Ozeri, Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Institute, Jerusalem, Israel; fax (972)6-625-4043; nozeri@fmams.org.il; www.fmams.org.il*

Young and restless? Fellowships for Jewish social entrepreneurs will challenge young innovators aged 21-35 to help build and sustain their own visions of a Jewish future. Fellows receive $60,000 "seed" capital for two years, intensive entrepreneurial training, mentorships technical assistance and health benefits. Apply by October 6. Fellowships begin February 2001. *Brian Gaines or Pella Schafer, Joshua Venture, 177 Union St. #1, San Francisco, CA 94123; (415)929-4989; fax (415)929-4988; www.joshuaventure.org*

Tachlis, the newsletter of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, offers ideas for collaborative programs between Jewish social service agencies, synagogues and government to meet the needs of underserved populations such as the elderly, the disabled, victims of domestic violence. *AJFCA, 557 Cranbury Rd. #2, East Brunswick, NJ 08816; (800)634-7346; fax (732)432-7127; AJFCA@ajfca; http://ajfca.org*

New Views of Old Rituals

A Large Print High Holiday Machzor (Hebrew/English). Make the holidays special for your parent or grandparent. Request their physician or eye care specialist to send or fax a note confirming that they have difficulty reading regular print. Free from *The Jewish Heritage for the Blind, 1655 E. 24th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229; toll free fax (877)230-2205; jewishheritage@aol.com*

Circumcision! Has feminist consciousness generated ambivalence about circumcision as the marker of Jewish identity? Are there gender differences in how we think about the ritual, or whether we accept the practice? How can we understand "the drop of blood" necessary for ritual circumcision in relationship to rituals surrounding the

Films on the Jewish Lesbian Experience

Treyf by Alisa Lebow and Cynthia Madansky; **Love Story** by Catrine Clay; **Emily and Gitta** by Tami Gold; **Fresh Blood** by b.h. Yael and **Naomi's Legacy** by Wendy Levey are five films on the Jewish lesbian experience, to rent or purchase from the film and video catalog of *Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, #500L, New York, NY 10013; (212)925-0606; fax (212)925-2052; orders@wmm.com; www.wmm.com.*

GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE BEST FOREIGN FILM
"KOHLER AND SCHRADER GIVE REMARKABLE PORTRAYALS IN ROLES RICH IN DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY."
-The Los Angeles Times
"A POIGNANT, TRUE LOVE STORY SET IN WARTIME BERLIN."
-The New York Times
Aimée & Jaguar
GERMANY'S OFFICIAL SELECTION FOR THE ACADEMY AWARDS
WINNER
BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL
SILVER BEAR

Aimée & Jaguar by Max Fäberböck, based on the true story of a dangerous love affair between Lilly Wust. a married exemplar of Nazi motherhood, and Felice Schragenheim, a Jewish member of the underground. German with English subtitles. *www.zeitgeist.com*

lood of menstruation and hildbirth? For an anthology n circumcision presenting istorical, anthropological, sychological and sociologi- al scholarship plus personal erspectives, send a one- age abstract by Oct. 15 *to Rahel Wasserfall and Eliza- eth Mark, 93 Union St., 400, Newton Centre, MA 2459; fax (617)964-6322; nark@brandeis.edu or vasserfall@brandeis.edu.* See page 35 about two ircumcision storybooks.)

Holocaust

ewish families' psycholo- y, beliefs, and reactions to he Holocaust. For a disser- ation, a researcher is looking or parent-child pairs who re either Holocaust sur- ivors—ages 60-85—and ffspring—ages 25-50—or for the control group) ewish parent-child pairs who are not. Participants fill ut an anonymous question- aire, confidentiality is ssured. *Ilana Breslau 212) 580-0204; breslau@yahoo.com*

Could your family mem- bers have had a Holocaust- era insurance policy and ou don't know about it? If ou are a Holocaust survivor or the heir of a Holocaust victim you may have a legitimate unpaid Holocaust era life, education or dowry insurance claim. *International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, P.O.B. 1163, Wall St. Station, New York, NY 10268; (800)957-3203; www.icheic.org*

Women in Holocaust fiction. A high school curriculum written by Rotem Wagner and Inbar Raveh discusses *Crossing the Red Sea* (in Polish) by Sofia Romanic- zowa, *Tzili* and *Katerina* by Aharon Appelfeld, and Ida Fink's short story "Eugenia" from *Traces*. You can order this in Hebrew or English for $10. *Yad Vashem, P.O.B. 3477, 91034, Jerusalem, Israel (972)2-675-1666; fax (972)2-641-1849; publishing@yad-vashem.org.il*

The Hidden Child, an extraordinary newsletter recounting the stories of children hidden during the Holocaust, published a 20-page issue on "The Separation of the Family" (Spring 2000). For their next issue on "Recovering the Children," tell about experiences immediately after the war, being reunited with your family, how you were found—or not found—by a relative or Jewish agency. *Rachelle Goldstein, The Hidden Child, 823 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017; hidden-child@adl.org*

Coming Up!

The Ms. Millenium Conference: Achieving Social, Political, and Economic Equality, sponsored by the eponymous magazine, will take place October 21 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City and will feature Maya Angelou, Gloria Steinem and Marcia Ann Gillespie. *Ms., 20 Exchange Pl., 22nd fl., New York, NY 10005; (877)463-3867; www.msmagazine.com*

FROM "TELLING TIME"

A 1916 Feminist Seder? Women celebrate Passover, Sisterhood of Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco.

Telling Time: To Everything There Is a Season is an eclectic exhibition of rituals and traditions for marking time in Jewish culture. Part 1, Spring and Summer, opened in May, and Part 2, Fall and Winter, opens November 4, for two years through May 2002 at the *Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2911 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94705; (510)549-6950; www.magnesmuseum.org*

—*compiled by Naomi Danis*

Breast Cancer

Race for the cure in Israel. Walking Together for Women's Health, Hilla BaGalil will take place in the Galilee on October 19. 4,000 participants will raise awareness about breast cancer—hopefully leading to early detection among Israeli women—and raise funds to establish a women's health center in Carmiel. A joint project of women in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Karmiel and Misgav. *Mandi Greenberg, Associated, 101 W. Mt. Royal Ave., Baltimore, MD 21201; (410)727-4828 x208; fax (410)576-9388; mgreenberg@jcfb.org or Francine Darling, fdarling@ujf.org*

Ten Steps to Protecting the Legal Rights of Breast Cancer Patients is a brochure to help you understand your options if you are denied coverage for medical treatment. Free from *Commission on Women in the Profession, American Bar Association, 750 N. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, IL 60611; (312)988-5715; fax(312)988-5865; www.abanet.org/women*

ibreast.com To respond to unanswered questions and nagging fears of women about breast cancer, Marissa Weiss, MD—co-author with her mother, Ellen Weiss, of *Living Beyond Breast Cancer*—launched an informative website that will also offer live monthly midnight chats. *www.ibreast.com*

When you help the other worthy organizations listed in these pages, please consider a tax-deductible contribution to LILITH, a crucial vehicle of communication and connection for Jewish women. Mail a contribution to LILITH, 250 W. 57th St., #2432, New York, NY 10107; Call 1-888-2-LILITH or fax 212-757-5705 to contribute by credit card. Thank you!

TIES THAT BIND

BY MICHELLE E. FRIEDMAN

PREPARING THE BODY FOR BURIAL

It is early morning when the call I dread but expect comes. Hastily, I dress in somber, practical clothing and rearrange my work schedule for the day. I know the routine—as a member of my synagogue's *chevra kadisha*, burial society, I have been through this sad drill before. But this time a cloud of disbelief hangs over me. I am going to prepare a friend for her grave.

As I hurry up Amsterdam Avenue to the funeral home, the roar of the street disorients me. I feel disconnected from such vitality, such an embrace of the day. The sight of the five other women *chevra* members who gather at the side door of the chapel with their stricken faces comforts me. We all knew the woman whose cancer-ravaged body lies below. We lived in the same neighborhood, watched our children tumble together in the playground, shared countless conversations.

Bypassing the old-world lobby with its regal moldings and marble floor, we descend a narrow staircase into a morbid basement emporium where the grim purpose of this place is all too clear. I try not to look, but my eye is invariably drawn to the tiny coffins; the delicately adorned, ivory-toned ones that could be jewelry boxes but I know await the death of a baby.

Just a few steps take us onto cement flooring and we enter a small room whose function seems janitorial. It is dominated by a white slab of a porcelain table. The *mais*, the body, is wheeled in on a gurney and positioned next to the table. Carefully and tenderly, the six of us lift the body of our friend onto the cold, hard surface and begin our work.

The procedure is a supremely respectful one. The *mais* is kept covered at all times. We make a drape of sheets before cutting off the hospital gown. Next, we remove all stigmata of final illness, indignity or unnatural intervention. The body will be returned to nature, delivered to the ground, without bandages or catheters. We, in the women's *chevra*, frequently perform half-manicures, taking off chipped nail polish and swabbing grime from beneath stiffened fingernails. We do not pass materials over the *mais*—all necessary items are handed around the side of the table. This body once housed a living spirit and our ritual honors that sanctity.

Conversation is minimal. Each of us hovers on the brink of tears. We rely on the ceremonial practicality of our task and the group's complicity to maintain composure. We confine speech to the practical; requesting materials, shifting limb positions, agreeing that we can go on to the next step.

We wash the *mais* in a cascade of water poured in a continuous stream from buckets held, for the first time, overhead. Now we must dry and dress her. We pat the body with cloth, change the drape, and shake out the package of coarse linen burial shrouds, the *tachrichim*. Blouse, trousers, bonnet, face covering, booties, belt, and apron—they are all here. I feel the hint of a smile as I imagine the workshop where this clothing is sewn. A macabre fashion endeavor perhaps, but not without a sense of style, for the women's *tachrichim* are trimmed with lace.

The job of dressing the *mais* is difficult. We struggle with the body's dead weight as we pull on each garment and then wind and tie the closing ribbons. Ironic how these shrouds fasten with the same bows as the miniature kimonos used to dress newborns in hospital nurseries.

I remember how I was recruited for this task. A dozen years before, at the end of a synagogue service, one of the women who works alongside me today tapped me on the shoulder. "Michelle," she said. "We need people for the women's *chevra*. You're a doctor—you can do it." True, I had seen death during my professional training but still I harbored countless terrors of the grave. This was a different opportunity to confront and explore my fears. I agreed to try it out.

Chevra kadisha. Literally translated, sacred fellowship. The ancient religious obligation of burial derives from spare biblical verses concerning the proper disposition of dead criminals. Some *chevras* can trace their histories back hundreds of years. Each evolves its own rituals and customs. One of ours is the knotting style we use to fasten the drawstrings.

continued on page 44

LAURIE DOUGLAS